

“Dh’fheumadh iad àit’ a dheanamh” (They would have to make a Place):
LAND AND BELONGING IN GAELIC NOVA SCOTIA

© Shamus Y. MacDonald

A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Folklore

Memorial University of Newfoundland

December 2017

St. John’s Newfoundland and Labrador

Abstract:

This thesis explores the way land has been perceived, described and experienced by Scottish Gaels in Nova Scotia. It examines how attitudes towards land are maintained and perpetuated through oral traditions and how oral history, legends and place names have fostered a sense of belonging in an adopted environment. Drawing on archival research and contemporary ethnographic fieldwork in Gaelic and English, it explores how people give anonymous aspects of the natural and built environment meaning, how personal and cultural significance is attached to landscapes, and how oral traditions contribute to a sense of place.

Exploring a largely unofficial tradition, my thesis includes a survey of Gaelic place names in Nova Scotia that shows how settlers and their descendants have interpreted their surroundings and instilled them with a sense of Gaelic identity. It also considers local traditions about emigration and settlement, reflecting on the messages these stories convey to modern residents and how they are used to construct an image of the past that is acceptable to the present.

Given its focus on land, this work investigates the protective attitude towards property long ascribed to Highland Gaels in the province, considering local perspectives of this claim and evaluating its origins. It also examines the personal and cultural impact of social stratification based on land in the region, namely between properties located along the shore and those in the backlands. Providing a more holistic understanding of rural depopulation, my thesis challenges romantic views that frame out-migration as a symptom of cultural wanderlust, demonstrating connections to linguistic and cultural loss and making clear the continued importance land plays in the lives of those who moved away. Taken together, this material explores the complex and highly developed connection to land expressed by Gaels in Nova Scotia and provides a case study of how an immigrant group can invest a landscape with meaning over time.

Acknowledgements:

In the folklore of eastern Nova Scotia, stories are told about spirits who return to earth to repay debts they accrued in life. In writing this thesis, I accrued a few of my own. Though hardly able to repay their collective generosity, I want to acknowledge here the debt of gratitude I owe those who helped me along the way. To begin, I want to thank my supervisor, Martin Lovelace.

Having provided my first introduction to the Department of Folklore, Martin was its most enduring influence. Even after his retirement, he continued to gently nudge my work in the right direction. Guiding my thesis across the finish line, Diane Tye was equally supportive, helping me refine my message and organize my thoughts.

Back home in Nova Scotia, special thanks are extended to Jim Watson. A mentor and friend, Seumas proofread the Gaelic. If there are any mistakes remaining, they are mine. Few people are more knowledgeable than him about Gaelic in Nova Scotia. A past professor is also due thanks. Laurie Stanley Blackwell fostered my interests as an undergraduate student and has been a source of continual encouragement and friendship ever since. Other friends, including Susan Cameron, Meghann Jack, Emily MacDonald, and Jessica MacLennan, helped in ways both small and large. For sharing their expertise and research, I want to acknowledge Callum Beck, Dan MacInnes, Stephanie Conn, Emily Clegg, Michael Newton, Glen Matheson, Paul MacDonald and Winnie MacDonald. Advice regarding translations was offered by Stacey MacLean, Effie Rankin, and Jeff MacDonald. Glen MacDonald, Theresa MacDonald, and Angus MacLeod paved the way with introductions and advice in northern Cape Breton. As my work came to a close, Lorrie MacKinnon offered enthusiastic support and valuable suggestions regarding the draft. Debbra Wilkinson, Nova Scotia Geomatics Centre, provided professional assistance regarding official place names and their history.

More personal thanks are owed to my parents, Helen and Jimmy, who long ago introduced me to the place this work is about and fostered a respect for its people and stories, and my wife, Jeslyn, who followed me down the long and winding road towards this degree and helped me emerge unscathed. My final thanks are extended to the local residents, living and dead, who shaped my knowledge of this tradition. Some are named in this thesis; many more work in the shadows. Suffice it to say knowing them has made all the difference.

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Abstract:	2
Acknowledgements:	3
Table of Contents:	5
List of Figures:	6
A Personal Reflection:	7
Chapter One: Introduction	10
1.1 Overview and Chapter breakdown	12
1.2 The Written Record	15
1.3 Stereotypes and Marginalization	29
1.4 An Internal Perspective	36
Chapter Two: Previous Fieldwork in Gaelic Nova Scotia	39
Chapter Three: Methodology	50
3.1 Fieldwork Techniques	53
3.2 Participants	56
3.3 Writing and Transcribing	63
3.4 Translation	65
3.5 Theoretical Approaches	66
3.6 Defining Place	67
Chapter Four: Emigration and Early Encounters with the Mi'kmaq:	69
Chapter Five: Settlement and Expansion:	101
Chapter Six: Gaelic Place Names in Nova Scotia:	128
Chapter Seven: Transforming Space into Place	159
Chapter Eight: Perceptions of Region	194
Chapter Nine: Attitudes towards land and land ownership:	219
Chapter Ten: Land Abandonment:	240
Chapter Eleven: Conclusions	268
References:	275

LIST OF FIGURES:

5.1: Map by Kay Portibny	119
5.2: Map by A. J. MacDougall	120
6.1: Place name map, Benacadie Glen	146
6.2: Place name map, Benacadie Pond	153
6.3: Place name map, Black Point and Meat Cove	155
6.4: Place name map by Barry George	156
8.1: Map by Allan MacLeod	210
8.2: Map by Michael Jack MacNeil	211
9.1: Map by Catherine MacNeil	224
9.2: Map by Alex MacDonald	225
10.1: Map by Martha Ramey	255
10.2: Illustration by Paul ‘Moose’ MacKinnon	256

A Personal Reflection:

The seeds of this thesis were sown in three fertile fields. Naturally enough, the first influence came from home. I was raised in a family that values stories and spent extended periods of time visiting my grandparents in Cape Breton. It was there I was exposed to a rural way of life and heard friends and relatives speak Gaelic. After completing an undergraduate degree in Celtic Studies, where I began learning the language myself, I spent a year studying in Scotland. The history and scenic beauty I encountered there was a source of continual interest, but reinforced my appreciation of the cultural heritage and landscape of Nova Scotia.

After returning to Canada, I spent several years working in the Eastern Arctic. Deeply impressed by the sense of connection Inuit have for the land in Nunavut, my eyes were opened to the special bonds that exist between indigenous groups and landscapes in their respective territories. This experience prompted me to ask questions about the sense of belonging immigrant groups can forge in an adopted environment; reflecting on my own links to an ancestral homeland and the sense of belonging Scottish Gaels feel in Nova Scotia. How have settlers and their descendants developed and sustained bonds with specific landscape elements in the province? More to the point, how have they interpreted an adopted environment and made it their own?

As a result of my interest in Gaelic language and culture in Nova Scotia, I suspected oral traditions held a key. After all, the first historians were storytellers. All over the world, the transmission of community history and traditional knowledge was once dependant on the spoken word. Legends, songs and stories brought people together, reinforced their cultural identity, and offered important learning opportunities. For this reason, oral traditions can provide valuable insights into the communities and people that maintain them. While my work would have been

more straightforward had it focused only on written works—no fieldwork, no transcriptions, and no translations—it would also have been less rigorous, less revealing, and less personally satisfying without the stories and perspectives included here.

To be clear, the material that follows has been shaped by those who have shared it with me. Folklore, after all, possesses different meanings to different people at different times. That includes me. It has been said that all writing is autobiographical, and in many regards that is true of this work as well. I belong to the cultural group and region described. I also know the power of land, having seen its impact within my own family. But reflexivity in ethnographic research is best when it illuminates the focus, and is not allowed to eclipse it. In this work my goal has been to shed light on the relationship people have with land in Gaelic Nova Scotia. My story is not theirs, and their stories have been my focus.

Unlike some studies, which feign objectivity through dispassion, my work does not pretend to be detached from its subject. Such an approach would be disingenuous. I care deeply about the people and place it describes: I can think of no better reason to devote so much time and effort to recording these stories. Despite this commitment, my thesis is not a praise piece. Scottish Gaels were not always fair in their dealings with land, either with each other or with members of the Mi'kmaq First Nation. To gloss over this reality would be unjust and inaccurate.

One of the tradition bearers with whom I spent a great deal of time over the years was the late Peter Jack MacLean of Rear Christmas Island. In addition to being an excellent Gaelic singer, Peter was a valued interpreter of local history. What made him particularly respected in this regard was his insightful and forthright nature. For those interested in the social and cultural history of the parish, Peter was able to paint a picture both beautiful and troubling. Life is composed of contrasts like these. In my thesis, I have tried to follow his example.

To be sure, others are more qualified to do this work. But perhaps because they are wiser too, they have not yet attempted it. In the end, the lessons I have learned around kitchen tables, woodsheds, and fishing boats are more profound than any thesis could express. Human connections, after all, reside at the heart of our work as folklorists. Many of the people who made this work possible are friends whose kindness, intelligence, and dignity have shaped me in countless ways. Several have now passed away and I hope my work acts as a small tribute to their generosity and knowledge, demonstrating the enduring impression they made on a fellow traveller. Other residents, young and old, continue to express the depth and beauty of the local tradition in Gaelic Nova Scotia, providing an eloquent rebuttal to the casual dismissal of minority languages and cultures wherever they are found.

Chapter One

Introduction

The second half of the eighteenth century ushered in a period of massive social and economic unrest in Scotland, eventually marked by the Highland Clearances and the forced eviction of entire communities from traditional tenancies in the Highlands and Islands. In the decades that followed more than thirty thousand Gaels immigrated to Nova Scotia, mainly to the eastern mainland and Cape Breton Island.

Characterized by cultural homogeneity and geographic isolation, regional settlement patterns allowed for the retention and adaptation of various ethnic markers in Nova Scotia, including the Gaelic language. In fact, Highland settlements grew quickly in the years following immigration and by the end of the nineteenth century most residents of Cape Breton Island spoke Gaelic (Kennedy 2001, 64). More importantly, settlers and their descendants came to feel at home in the province—the traditional territory of the Mi'kmaq First Nation. But what does that mean exactly? What makes a place feel like home? How are landscapes given meaning? And what do oral traditions reveal about this process?

Despite being staples for scholars in other areas (See, for instance, Basso 1996; Farmer 2008; Pocius 2000; Ryden 1993; Thornton 2008), questions like these have rarely been addressed in Gaelic Nova Scotia. For obvious reasons, most scholars have focused on documenting and preserving its threatened language and culture, rather than exploring and analyzing its processes and development (Sparling 2005, 126). After all, implicit and explicit institutional, social and economic pressure to assimilate eventually impeded intergenerational transmission of Gaelic in Nova Scotia, first on the mainland and then in Cape Breton. Combined with outmigration, this created a linguistic tipping point during the mid-twentieth century after

which few children were socialized in Gaelic (Mertz 1989). Since a similar process has been at work for centuries in Scotland, Gaelic is now considered endangered.

Partly for this reason, previous research efforts have usually focused on elements of its oral tradition that are especially vulnerable to language attrition. As a result, the ways in which stories and songs have continued to evolve to reflect a new environment and landscape have largely been overlooked in Gaelic Nova Scotia. This has fostered an inaccurate image of a community fixed in time, preserving, but not creating, oral traditions. Community profiles focused on the number of people who moved away have also obscured the fact that others have always stayed: Scottish Gaels have now been a stable presence in the region for more than two centuries. What this means is that despite language loss and out-migration, social connections to land were never severed in this community and contemporary tradition bearers remain able to shed light on their importance. In fact, a history of dispossession, dynamic oral tradition, and long residency in the province suggests they have an interesting perspective to share.

For these reasons, my thesis sets out to explore human connections to place by focusing on the experience of Scottish Gaels in Nova Scotia. Making use of material in Gaelic and English, I am interested in how immigrants and their descendants have perceived, described and experienced the land they settled; not only reconciling their own displacement from Scotland, but their role in doing the same to Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia. Using stories about emigration as a starting point, my research explores how immigrants and their descendants instilled a foreign landscape with personal and cultural meaning. Drawing on a combination of archival research and contemporary fieldwork, I want to know how attitudes towards land are maintained and perpetuated through oral traditions and how oral history, historical legends, and toponyms contribute to a sense of belonging for Scottish Gaels in Nova Scotia. My work is not premised on

the idea that this group has a unique perspective, one that sets them apart from all others, but that their relationship with the world is as worthy of study as any other and that the ways local residents understand the land they inhabit reveal something about their history, culture, and identity, and the larger relationship between folklore and place.

1.1 Overview and chapter breakdown

Having provided an introduction to my thesis topic, the rest of this chapter focuses on the written record that informs it. It begins with a description of interdisciplinary research on the bonds between people and place. Highlighting the role folklorists have played in this work, I summarize the historic importance of regional studies, the rise of critical regionalism, and the value of ethnographic fieldwork. This leads to a review of historical and cultural studies that have shaped my understanding of the landscape and population of Gaelic Nova Scotia. Whenever possible, I draw attention to weaknesses in historic sources and modern studies. Showing how outside observers have described this group, for instance, I discuss the impact of stereotypes and marginalization. Drawing on the results of narrative studies from other communities, this chapter concludes by showing the potential oral traditions provide to better understand this community on its own terms.

With this importance in mind, Chapter Two (Previous Fieldwork in Gaelic Nova Scotia) provides an outline of ethnographic fieldwork in Gaelic Nova Scotia. Noting that early contributions often came in the form of publications aimed at a local audience, this chapter provides an overview of professional collection efforts organized by folklorists such as John Lorne Campbell, Charles Dunn, MacEdward Leach, Helen Creighton, and John Shaw. I review major themes evident in their work, including the vital role language played in collection efforts, and how a concern with preservation has obscured questions about the meaning and continued

development of the local tradition.

Having explored how others have conducted fieldwork in Gaelic Nova Scotia, Chapter Three (Methodology) explores my role in doing the same. I begin by describing my status within the community and how I arranged fieldwork with participants in the first place. This moves into a discussion about the three separate techniques I employed; open ended interviews, windshield tours, and a mental mapping exercise. Contextualizing my interpretation of the results, I outline my conception of place, theoretical perspective, and transcription technique. This chapter concludes by providing biographical information about the tradition bearers.

With this personal, academic and social context established, the rest of the chapters focus on the research results. Providing a social and historical background of immigration from Highland Scotland, Chapter Four (Emigration and Encountering the Mi'kmaq) discusses the vital role land played in the emigration process and describes local traditions surrounding emigration and early encounters with the Mi'kmaq. Using a variety of theoretical approaches, I explore the messages these narratives convey to contemporary residents and how they are used to construct an image of the past that is acceptable to the present.

This leads to material concerned with the settlement and expansion of Scottish Gaels in Nova Scotia. Oral traditions describing the challenges immigrants faced and their impact on local forests is highlighted in Chapter Five (Settlement and Expansion) which concludes by looking at secondary migrations within the region and how narratives describing this movement assign settlers and their children a growing expertise and confidence. Like the previous chapter, this material is explored using a variety of theoretical approaches.

Reinforcing how settlers and their descendants laid claim to the land they settled, Chapter Six (Gaelic Place Names in Nova Scotia) examines the nature and distribution of Gaelic place

names in Nova Scotia. Drawing on historical publications, maps and modern fieldwork, I demonstrate the extent to which a Gaelic sense of identity was imprinted on parts of the local landscape. Asking what toponyms tell us about residents and their relationship to land, this chapter probes the personal and social meaning place names possess for current residents.

Expanding on this theme, Chapter Seven (Transforming Space into Place) demonstrates the intimate relationship settlers and their descendants forged with specific elements of the local landscape. I ask how anonymous aspects of our surroundings are given meaning, how personal and cultural significance is attached to places, and how oral traditions contribute to a sense of place in Gaelic Nova Scotia. I also highlight how the landscape is understood within a physical and metaphysical framework.

Having explored personal and social connections to minor parts of the natural and built environment, Chapter Eight (Perceptions of Region) broadens the focus to consider how residents see larger areas. Were their ancestors wise to come to Nova Scotia? Do they still feel connected to the landscape in Scotland? Since previous research has demonstrated the economic disparity that existed between residents who settled near the shore and those who lived in the backlands, this chapter examines the long-term social and cultural ramifications of this division.

Chapter Nine (Attitudes to Land Ownership) goes on to address historic accounts that depict settlers and their descendants as being especially possessive and protective of land in Nova Scotia. In this chapter residents provide their own perspective on this claim, offering stories and personal reflections that explain this trait and providing insights into how they choose to see their ancestors and how other narratives in this community can be understood.

Given the strong attachment to land this material reveals, Chapter Ten (Land Abandonment and Enduring Bonds) asks how we should understand rural depopulation and land

abandonment in the region. Challenging romantic perspectives that frame out-migration as a symptom of cultural wanderlust or a product of poor land, it explores the role linguistic and cultural loss have played in this process. Positioning fieldwork at the forefront of this discussion, my work shows how rural residents understand the movement and the continued role of land in their lives.

Chapter Eleven (Conclusion) reviews the material examined in each chapter, bringing the results together and providing a final analysis of their significance.

1.2 The Written Record

Although my thesis focuses on specific people living in a specific place, given that people around the world grow attached to the places where they live, its implications extend beyond those narrow boundaries. For the same reason, my work draws on a broad range of literature exploring the bonds people form with their environment in general, and the history and culture of this group in particular. The following section shows how it relates to a larger academic tradition, addressing gaps in the extant literature and providing local perspectives that both complement and challenge popular notions of Gaelic Nova Scotia.

To begin, we should recognize that spatial boundaries have long been used to define surveys that examine songs, stories, and beliefs maintained in a given community. While European folklorists have been particularly committed to this model, regional ethnographic studies have also been influential in North America. During the twentieth century, for instance, Helen Creighton examined vernacular beliefs in Lunenburg County, Nova Scotia (1976); Louise Manny collected songs from Miramichi, New Brunswick (1968), and Herbert Halpert explored folktales and legends in the Pine Barrens of New Jersey (1947).

In many cases, geography was responsible for bringing the folklorists to the folk in the

first place. Communities that were perceived as isolated and remote were long thought to harbour older—and ostensibly more desirable—material: what Tylor called ‘survivals’ (1920: 16). Cecil Sharp pursued this theory into the hills and hollows of Appalachia. Based on his work there, he compiled one of the best regional song collections ever made in the United States (1952). His colleague, Maud Karpeles, later went to coastal Newfoundland for the same reason. There she discovered a sea-faring heritage that was far more innovative and less isolated than she expected, as Karpeles later explained: “...the island has not had the same immunity from modern civilization, for the sea does not isolate to the same extent as does a mountain range” (1971, 17).

With or without the consent of folklorists, regional studies like these have been used in nation-building exercises whereby local traditions have been posited as the embodiment of certain larger identities—what Benedict Anderson calls ‘imagined communities’ (1991). This work was facilitated by the rise of industrialization and the disconnect it fostered between people and their ancestral ties to family, religion and community. Romantic nationalists, inspired by Johann Herder, stepped into the breach claiming a national soul was revealed through its folk poetry (Zumwalt 1988: 77).

The impact on collection efforts was profound. In nineteenth-century Finland, for example, the growth of folklore studies was explicitly linked to nationalistic goals (Dundes 1999, 37—45). Efforts to collect, preserve and promote oral traditions in the country grew rapidly during this period, inspiring critical theoretical developments in Folklore. Similarly, generations of Irish folklorists focused their attention on the rural west. Though its boundaries were a human construct like any other, because it maintained a language and tradition lost to acculturation elsewhere, the heartland of Irish identity was posited as the “wild and purer west” (O’Sullivan 2001, 87). A regional tradition was thus used to support a form of romantic nationalism that

challenged British authority in Ireland. While this focus came at the expense of traditions maintained elsewhere in Ireland—particularly those in urban, English speaking areas—popular support for fieldwork in the west helped stimulate the creation of the Irish Folklore Commission, which went on to amass one of the greatest collections of ethnographic material in the world.

Closer to home, folk traditions have also been used to shape a sense of identity in Newfoundland. Joey Smallwood, who steered the course of the island for a generation, recognized early on the potential folklore offered to encourage nationalistic pride and unity in islanders (Narváez 2012, 223). With the advent of confederation and resettlement—and fearing an associated loss in regional identity—provincial folklorists redoubled their efforts to collect and preserve folklore on the island. Significantly, residents without strong ties to the region have often been at the forefront of cultural nationalism in Newfoundland (Pocius 2000, 23).

While this work contributed to the collection, study and preservation of material that might have otherwise gone unrecorded, special concern for the economic and political potential of folk traditions sometimes exerted undue influence on the nature of the material collected. Ian McKay argues that an emphasis on collecting and promoting traditional, rural folklore and craft in Nova Scotia fostered an inaccurate and romantic image of the province as pre-industrial and bucolic. Importantly, this impression has been accepted, and even embraced, by many residents (McKay 1994). Critical regionalism, an interdisciplinary concern that owes much to architectural historian Kenneth Frampton, provides an opportunity to confront these issues directly. Mary Hufford and others have demonstrated its value to Folklore, scrutinizing the concept of region and examining how places are constructed and manipulated. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has made a rich contribution, highlighting, for instance, the struggle for power embedded in place (eg. 2003).

Early folklorists, on the other hand, often relegated the physical setting to the background: the stage on which the action occurred. In certain ways this approach recalls an emphasis on text that overshadowed context: “Because the item itself was of paramount concern, its geographical or social provenance was deemed secondary, useful in establishing transmission or migration patterns but otherwise incidental”(Allen and Schlereth 1990, 6). Yet as proponents of contextualism and performance studies make clear, the setting is always significant.

The ways in which we see the world, and thus understand our surroundings, are culturally, socially and religiously constructed. Indeed, as Brian Graham writes, “landscapes, whether depicted in literature, art, maps and even wall murals, or viewed on the ground, are signifiers of the cultures of those who have made them” (1997, 5). Western concepts of landscape, for instance, owe much to Renaissance painters who created idealized pastoral scenes, understood at a glance, and Romantic poets, such as William Wordsworth, who celebrated the aesthetic qualities of rural and wild settings, while ignoring their social and political realities (Johnson 2007, 22). Simon Schama goes so far as to argue that: “Landscapes are culture before they are nature, constructs of the imagination projected onto wood and water and rock” (1995, 91).

In order to make clear the human agency involved in this process, scholars from various disciplines began referring to these places as cultural landscapes: broadly defined as natural environments shaped by human presence. Carl Sauer is credited with developing much of the early academic interest in this work. A geographer based at the University of California at Berkeley, Sauer was a committed opponent of environmental determinism who used the study of cultural landscapes to demonstrate the myriad ways in which human activity shapes the environment. Stressing the importance of fieldwork and research with primary sources, he forged

important links with anthropologists and historians. Bridging the gap between anthropology and geography, Fred Kniffen (1986) later expanded the concept of cultural landscapes to include vernacular architecture.

Since that time, research into the bonds between people and place has evolved through contributions from various academic disciplines striving to develop a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the landscape and our role in it. Like Folklore itself, this spatial turn embodies a diversity of perspectives that represents a valuable asset according to Paul Groth: “The multiplicity of voices and approaches in cultural landscape studies has brought not incoherence but a flexible, diverse strength” (Groth and Bressie 1997, 21).

Environmental psychologists, for instance, have defined the connection between people and place as a psychological process, akin to a parental bond, while sociologists have used attachment theory to understand the connection people feel towards places that no longer exist. Yi-Fun Tuan, a humanistic geographer who studied under Sauer, has paid special attention to these bonds, coining the term “topophilia” to describe the affection people feel for landscapes (Tuan 1974). Using his training as an archeologist and geographer, E. E. Evans scrutinized local history by looking at contemporary evidence in the Irish landscape. W. G. Hoskins did much the same in England, suggesting landscapes are “...the richest historical record we possess” (2014, 14).

Work like this underscores the important role the past plays in the meaning we ascribe to places today. Thomas Thornton makes this point clear when he claims that, “Places are products of history; to ignore this fact is to risk missing a good deal of their nuance and meaning” (2008, 16). The empirical nature of some landscape studies—strong in description but weak in analysis—has also been criticized for neglecting theory and eschewing social context (Johnson

2007, 81). J. B. Jackson, who contributed greatly to the popularization of cultural landscape studies in North America, warns that landscape studies that are too focused on archival and literary research run the risk of being little more than regional histories (1984, xi). Lisa Gabbert and Paul Jordon-Smith point out that contemporary place-based studies are sometimes criticized for being old fashioned and alarmist (2007).

In order to avoid such pitfalls, scholars have increasingly turned to ethnography for answers, highlighting the social and cultural dimensions of landscapes. Hugh Brody used an ethnographic approach to explore indigenous perspectives of land in British Columbia and the Canadian Eastern Arctic (1982, 2001). Jared Farmer applied a similar lens to Mormons in Utah (2008). Trained in American Studies, Kent Ryden claims that folklore brings landscapes to life for residents, since, "... folk narrative is a vital and powerful means by which knowledge of the invisible landscape is communicated, expressed and maintained. In fact, the sense of place—the sense of dwelling in the invisible landscape—is in large part a creation of folklore and is expressed most eloquently through folklore" (Ryden 1993, 45).

In recent years, Gabbert and Jordon-Smith have outlined some of the ways folklorists have contributed to work like this, making the point that, "we have now entered that place in the study of place that has been reconceptualized from text to process, from static entity to performance and event (2007; 220). Following a path blazed by Fred Kniffen, for instance, Henry Glassie investigated built heritage and material culture in regions such as Middle Virginia (1975) and Northern Ireland (1982). He demonstrates how tangible and intangible heritage—vernacular architecture and oral history for instance—can combine to create a sense of place while demarcating regional boundaries (Glassie 1982: 664). Also in Northern Ireland, Ray Cashman shows how nostalgia and material culture come together to contribute to a sense of

community (2006). Gerald Pocius, another folklorist specializing in material culture, explored similar issues in outport Newfoundland (2000). Contrasting the flexibility of the built heritage he encountered with the stability of the cultural values embodied in it, Pocius argues that residents commemorate the past not through material remnants but through their use of space and oral traditions.

One of the ways this can happen, of course, is through belief and legend. In his work, folklorist Jim Griffith examines cultural traditions like these, linking the spiritual to the tangible in the Pimeria Alta of Arizona (1992). Working in the same state, Keith Basso, a cultural anthropologist, provides compelling evidence of the ways place names and stories foster a sense of place for the Western Apache (1996). Basso also asks important questions about the nature of cultural landscapes. Do they require a permanent human presence to exist? Or do mental and emotional connections bring them to life?

A growing number of scholars now suggest personal and social meaning resides at the heart of cultural landscapes; the physical and metaphysical embodied in place. This shift is vital since all parts of the globe are now affected by human action and perception. As Keith Basso argues, “geographical landscapes are never culturally vacant” (1996, 75). Moreover, more restrictive definitions privilege societies that transform the land visually and materially yet landscapes with few physical reminders of human occupation may resonate with spiritual and mythological meaning (Arntzen 2003, 87). By expanding our concept of landscapes, scholars demonstrate that, “landscapes are always in process, potentially conflicted untidy and uneasy” (Bender & Winer 2001, 3). As always, context is critical. So what does the written record reveal about this community? And where does my work fit within that literary tradition?

Various historical and cultural studies have shaped my understanding of the landscape and population of Gaelic Nova Scotia. Some examine the history of the region, while others describe its social and cultural background. Despite the value of this material, gaps remain. Early regional histories—voluminous but ethnocentric—provide valuable information about exploration, military activities, economic conditions and the inner machinations of government, but reveal little about the everyday lives of settlers and their families, for instance. In that regard, travel journals are usually more helpful. Dependent on farmers and fishermen, clergy and scholars, travellers often discussed daily life with a range of local residents, recording these conversations alongside their own impressions.

Joseph Howe provides a good example. A journalist, politician and public servant, Howe assiduously chronicled his trips around the mainland between 1828 and 1831. These accounts show an astute and sympathetic observer; as likely to describe the nature of post office conversations as the effect the legislature was having on road conditions in the region. Compiled and edited by M.G. Parks (Howe 1983), Howe's descriptions of life in the colony paint a vivid picture of the region at an early stage of its development. His remarks about Highland settlements on the mainland are particularly useful for my work.

Howe was not the only traveller to describe the region in print. From the earliest days of European exploration, visitors have recorded their impressions of the area and its inhabitants. Brian Tennyson has compiled an excellent collection of examples from Cape Breton (2014). Early accounts are usually official, detailing the economic, military and settlement potential the region offered. Others include valuable ethnographic and linguistic information about the Mi'kmaq. Descriptions of Gaels in the region, just prior to large-scale settlement, are provided by fellow Highlander Patrick Campbell, who travelled across North America, and Lord Selkirk,

who established a colony of Gaels in neighboring Prince Edward Island (Campbell 1937; Selkirk 1958).

As the settlement period waned, visitors increasingly came to the province as tourists. Searching out people and places that might interest their readers, writers joined them. While some used condescension and feigned confusion for comic effect—the urbane visitor trapped among primitive peoples was a popular trope in travel writing—their accounts also describe the landscape and elements of everyday life residents likely considered too mundane to record. Evidently, a few were surprised by the linguistic profile of the island, making much of the ubiquity of Gaelic (Tennyson 2014, 15).

While exact figures are impossible to determine, by the end of the nineteenth century nearly a hundred thousand Scottish Gaels were living in Nova Scotia. Though it has never enjoyed official status, Scottish Gaelic was spoken from eastern Colchester County, through the counties of Pictou and Antigonish, parts of Guysborough and in all four counties in Cape Breton. A petition submitted to the provincial government in 1857 illustrates the degree to which the language set these communities apart. Even along the western frontier of the area where the language was spoken, Gaelic was used so regularly that residents of a neighboring settlement, New Annan, asked to join another electoral district: “Your petitioners therefore complain that they cannot well transact business with the inhabitants of Earltown as it is generally done in the Galick language, which they do not understand” (Petition from Inhabitants of Electoral District No. 8 in New Annan, 1857).

Early historians, many of them clergy, provide glimpses into these communities. A prime example comes from the cradle of Scottish settlement in the province. In his history of Pictou County, Rev. George Patterson combined facts and figures, names and dates, with details from oral tradition (Patterson 1877). The result is a coherent and compelling narrative that touches on

numerous aspects of colonial life in Nova Scotia. His son, G. G. Patterson, later wrote a history of Victoria County, Cape Breton. Compiled and edited by W. J. MacDonald, it also includes valuable information on settlement patterns and place names (Patterson 1978). Equally important is the history of Inverness County, produced by John L. MacDougall, which combines historical accounts with genealogical records (1922).

Given the prominent role accorded to ancestry in local conceptions of the past, it seems fitting that genealogy and history are so often combined in local publications. Indeed, even when presented as genealogies, many examples contain details about settlement, community life and industry found nowhere else in print, serving as *de facto* community histories. Unfortunately, according to Rosemary Ommer, this genealogical focus sometimes masks their potential as historical sources: “such valuable documentary evidence has been under-utilized by researchers...” (1977, 216).

Historic examples of this work include the histories of Antigonish County (Rankin 1929), Christmas Island (MacKenzie 1926), Cape North (MacDonald 1933), and Mabou (MacDonald 1952). Modern publications that follow this model focus on communities such as Boisdale (MacMillan 1986), East Bay (MacMillan 2001) and Glendale (Glendale Gaelic & Historical Society 2002). Interestingly, Daniel MacInnes claims the advent of published genealogies in Gaelic Nova Scotia likely stemmed from growing doubts about the sustainability of the oral tradition (2011). The variety of material contained in these volumes, and their emergence in the years just before language shift, appears to lend credence to this theory.

Because of its foundational importance many modern scholars have written about immigration to Nova Scotia from Gaelic Scotland. Some studies focus on the economic nature of the Highland Clearances, highlighting the push and pull factors that drove Gaels to North

America (eg. Richards 2000, 2007; Bumsted 1982). Others draw attention to the human cost of the exodus, probing elements of the oral tradition for answers (eg. Hunter 1994; Craig 1997). Although the most practical and wide-ranging investigation of this community is arguably by Michael Kennedy (2001), Douglas Campbell and Ray MacLean also provide a valuable analysis resulting from extensive archival research and fieldwork with local residents (1974).

Not surprisingly, given its growing international profile, instrumental music has been an especially popular subject of academic inquiry in Gaelic Nova Scotia. John Gibson is responsible for the most substantial contribution (1998, 2002). Tracing the historic connections between bagpipers here and in Scotland, Gibson argues that players in Cape Breton maintained a musical style lost overseas. Similar claims have been made about local singing, dancing and fiddling traditions (Bennett 1997, 130—134). Studies like these frequently depict the region as home to marginal survivals, showing “how a trait may disappear in the original center of its geographic distribution...but can survive and even flourish much longer in the outskirts or margins of that area” (Nettl 1976, 18).

Remarkably, visitors to the area started making such claims more than a century ago. Rev. Dr. Masson, for example, stated in 1873 that “In some parts of Cape Breton...you will find the people to this day, even in dress, very much the same as they were in the Highlands when I was a child, and long before some of you were born” (1873: 41).

Accurate or not, this perception has too often obscured the adaptability of the local tradition. In fact, Liz Doherty argues that change—and resistance to change—has characterized the fiddling tradition for much of the twentieth century (1996). Glen Graham provides additional evidence, highlighting the resiliency of the local fiddling tradition in the face of language loss (2006). Taking an ethnographic approach to her PhD thesis, Stephanie Conn paints an evocative

picture of how Gaelic songs are shared in the region today and the role recordings play in their preservation (2012).

Contrary to popular opinion, immigration was not always a socially levelling experience in Gaelic Nova Scotia. Rusty Bittermann shows that community hierarchies were often recreated in the region according to the land immigrants were granted upon their arrival (1988). Expanding on this focus, Stephen Hornsby has examined the impact these immigrants and their descendants had on the agricultural and economic development of nineteenth century Cape Breton. In doing so, he suggests reasons why they increasingly abandoned an agricultural lifestyle and chose to move away (Hornsby 1992).

Of course, not all residents who gave up farming left the region. By the early years of the twentieth century, thousands of Gaels had taken up work in the mines and steel plants of Nova Scotia. Historians such as David Frank and Del Muise, along with folklorist Richard MacKinnon (2009) have shed light on the nature of the communities they forged in the industrial regions. A focus on rural outmigration has too often obscured the fact that Scottish Gaels remain in nearly all areas of the province they settled upwards of two hundred years ago. This prompts questions about the value of land to settlers and their descendants. After all, Kent Ryden reminds us that, “a complex, deeply felt sense of place can emerge whenever and wherever people settle on the land long enough to develop shared experiences and tell stories about those experiences” (1993, 99).

My thesis aims to explore this sense of place. Though informed by scholarship from various locales, my work is particularly indebted to research in culturally related communities. Scholars have long been interested in the bonds that exist between people, place and memory in Ireland, for example (Glassie 1982; Graham 1997; Kockel 1995; O Laoire 2005; Smyth 2001).

Naturally enough, these links have also been investigated in Scotland (Durie, Yeoman & McMahon-Beattie 2006; MacIntosh 2004; MacLean 1959). W. F. Nicolaisen, for instance, has made a major contribution to the study of place names and their connection to oral traditions (1961, 1973, 1992). Michael Newton, a leading scholar in Celtic Studies, explains the importance of this material in the Highlands:

The embedding of communal history in the Gaelic notion of landscape makes it a kind of living library of tradition. Tradition-bearers make allusion to the lore encoded in the landscape as a source of authority and a touchstone of identity, and these links have reinforced the connection between people and place and the primacy of the local community in the past. (2009, 296)

Significantly, these links to land have received comparatively little attention in the culturally related community in Nova Scotia. This omission is striking since preliminary research has made clear its potential. For example, Gordon MacLennan has shown the value of working with place names to unlock oral traditions by highlighting three local variants of an etiological legend in Margaree (1984). John Shaw has also touched on the wealth of local legends with international counterparts in Cape Breton (2007a). Although Gaelic place names have also been identified in studies going back nearly a century (Brown 1922, Fergusson 1967, Nilsen 1989-90, MacDonald 1992, MacDonald 2013) mine is the first to focus on their nature and distribution at the provincial level, asking what toponyms tell us about Scottish Gaels and their relationship with land in Nova Scotia.

Many studies also reference the vital role land played in drawing settlers to the province, with some suggesting dispossession from Scotland made Gaels inordinately possessive of land in Nova Scotia. This is an important claim, but what do local people have to say about it? Far too often, they are not consulted at all. Material that features tradition bearers describing local historical and social trends in their own words—and in their traditional language—is surprisingly

rare in Gaelic Nova Scotia. Given the role oral traditions play in this community, this poses a serious problem.

For generations, informal gatherings between friends, neighbors and family formed the cornerstone of this community, reinforcing social norms and perpetuating cultural traditions among Scottish Gaels. Songs and stories were used to maintain unwritten community histories and reinforce communal values. Notwithstanding an established literary tradition, Scottish Gaels usually passed down their history and culture by word of mouth. Describing the role tradition bearers play in this process, Highland ethnologist Donald Archie MacDonald explains that, “In a largely undocumented minority culture, these people are not only our artists and historians, they are also the live books and manuscripts that enshrine the materials and much of the scholarship” (1982, 426).

Unfortunately, a shortage of scholars able to work in Gaelic—the language to which many local traditions are inextricably linked—means that a great deal of important knowledge has been routinely overlooked or ignored. This failing has achieved a normalcy that masks its shortcomings, according to Michael Kennedy: “The selective and often inaccurate interpretation of Gaelic history, and the exclusion of any sort of Gaelic voice from that historical discourse, present a very lopsided view of the Gaelic world and a serious obstacle to our understanding of its people and events” (1999: 272).

Perhaps as a result, works of fiction are sometimes asked to speak on behalf of the Gaels of Nova Scotia. Alistair MacLeod is the foremost literary interpreter of this tradition. In his spare but evocative prose, MacLeod often returns to the themes of culture and homeland. Authors such as Sheldon Currie, Tessie Gillis, Hugh MacLennan, and Ellison Robertson have also penned stories about Gaels in Cape Breton. Their work draws attention to critical episodes in island history,

including rural depopulation, industrial strife, and a modern search for roots. Despite sharing many of the same concerns, however, critical differences exist between works of fiction and oral traditions.

Fictional works are unchanging, individual constructions, while oral traditions are dynamic, communal creations, evolving over time and shaped by all those who share them. Whereas fictional literature is usually projected outward, towards a diverse, multi-cultural audience, oral traditions are typically aimed inward, trained on local residents and cultural insiders. Through their work, writers are able to shed light on the internal dynamics that move and shape a people, but tradition bearers are capable of the same. Indeed, cultural insiders, even those with little formal education, are often remarkably capable of providing great insight into the societies of which they are part.

For this reason community histories produced by local residents are especially valuable in Gaelic Nova Scotia. A recent history of Washabuck, for instance, touches on nearly all aspects of life and work in the community featuring information on education, religion, ship-building, fishing and farming, music, and a nineteenth century murder (MacLean 2014). Similarly, a history of Framboise, published by the parish council, contains a wealth of oral traditions, including historical legends and place names, recorded from local tradition bearers (Cumming *et al.*, 1984). Though less common, autobiographical material published by local residents is also valuable. Works by Angus Hector MacLean (1976), Duncan Hugh MacLellan (2004) and Neil MacNeil (1998), who each spoke Gaelic, provide valuable accounts of religion, education and social relations in early twentieth century Cape Breton.

1.3 Stereotypes and Marginalization

The internal perspective this material exposes is especially important when we consider how outsiders have depicted the Gaels. After all, English subjugation of Scotland was both political and psychological. As part of this process, Gaelic language and culture were maligned and

suppressed for centuries. Speakers were branded as primitive, unambitious and uneducated while their language was characterized as unrefined and unfashionable, hastening its decline.

Stereotypes like these proved resilient and were brought to North America, influencing the way settlers were described in Nova Scotia.

Thomas Chandler Haliburton called immigrants to Cape Breton “indigent and ignorant Scotch islanders...equally poor and illiterate” (Quoted in Tennyson 2014: 129) while Rev. Thomas Trotter described the Highlanders of Antigonish as “ignorant and lazy” (Quoted in MacNeil 1986: 41). Visiting the region in 1832, John MacGregor advised that, “The Highland Scotch, unless intermixed with other settlers, are not only careless, in many particulars, of cleanliness within their house, but are also regardless of neatness and convenience in their agricultural implements and arrangements” (Quoted in Campbell & MacLean 1974: 56).

Of course, not all accounts were so negative. Praising their skill as pioneers, Joseph Howe took issue with the suggestion Scottish Gaels “deserve the character of Barbarians given to them by some of our public declaimers” (Quoted in Howe 1973, 179). Abraham Gesner went further, singling them out for special praise:

Perhaps there are no race of people better adapted to the climate of North America than that of the Highlands of Scotland. The habits, employments, and customs of the Highlander seem to fit him for the American forest, which he penetrates without feeling the gloom and melancholy experienced by those who have been brought up in towns and amidst the fertile fields of highly cultivated districts. Scotch immigrants are hardy, industrious, and cheerful, and experience has fully proved that no people meet the first difficulties of settling wild lands with greater patience and fortitude. (Quoted in Campey 2008, 122-123)

Nineteenth century observations about their farming productivity are equally contradictory (Morgan 2008, 119). Some accounts praise efforts and industry of the Gaels, while others characterize immigrants and their descendants as indolent and unprogressive. Echoing a

common complaint, the Earl of Selkirk claimed Highlanders worked until they secured the necessities of life, after which they showed little ambition and reverted to “the indulgence of their old habits of indolence to the accumulation of property by a continuance of active industry” (Quoted in Gentilcore 1956, 399).

Many period writers also remarked on the apparent indifference group members displayed towards material progress, prompting various explanations from modern scholars. Campbell and MacLean suggest that, “never having known prosperity, they did not miss it” (1974, 65). Charles Dunn, on the other hand, argues that, “Their previous environment had encouraged an attitude toward life that demanded only a very meager standard of living so long as there was ample opportunity for amusement and happiness. The Highlander was thus more of an artist than a labourer...” (Dunn [1953] 1991, 125). Approaching the issue from a different perspective, R. Louis Gentilcore explains that, “The Highlander was not an outstanding farmer. He had always been a soldier and the sword came more naturally to his hands than the plow or the spade” (1956, 385).

Importantly however, by comparing census records from various communities in nineteenth century Nova Scotia, Alan R. MacNeil shows that generalizations about the relative lack of productivity on farms owned by Highland Scots are not borne out by the statistical evidence. Instead, he argues, writers have been “unduly influenced by cultural stereotypes and have ignored or underestimated significant determinants such as location, market accessibility and inter-regional trade” (MacNeil 1986, 52).

Certainly, other witnesses paint a very different picture of the Highlanders in nineteenth century Nova Scotia. Travelling between Merigomish and Cape George, an area settled extensively by Scottish Gaels, during the early nineteenth century, Anthony Lockwood reported

that, “The whole extent is well settled; the large barns and extensive clearances indicate favorably, both of the inhabitants and soil” (Lockwood 1818, 48). Writing about his native Cape Breton, John Bourinot records that “...the inhabitants are all Scots, and, as a rule, are a well-to-do class. Some of the best farms in the Province are here to be seen, proving conclusively the fine agricultural capabilities of the island” (Quoted in Tennyson 2014, 196). Though he laments the lack of charm their farms possessed, Joseph Howe also concedes that they are “extensive, and nearly all of them as productive as any to be found within the Province” (Howe 1973, 79).

Unfortunately, misrepresentations and stereotypes continued to plague this group during the twentieth century. Indeed, in recent years, Michael Kennedy has argued that, “The association of Gaelic culture with alcoholism, melancholia and dysfunctional behavior has become so common in literature as to have reached the point of almost grotesque stereotype” (Kennedy 1998, 9). Even those tasked with writing their history have sometimes betrayed a biased and prejudiced perspective.

Historian J. M. Bumsted, for instance, who has written extensively about emigration from Highland Scotland to Canada, describes the Gaels as “illiterate, semi-barbarians” (1979, 16) and complains that “Attempting to deal with the motivations of a population which largely lacked the skills of writing and the ability of fluent self-expression is no easy task” (1982, xiv). Besides conflating literacy with the ability to communicate, this casual dismissal of oral traditions in a community in which they were the primary form of transmitting historical knowledge seems highly irresponsible.

Oversimplified and inaccurate portrayals of this community have even appeared at the highest levels of government. In a report prepared for the Canadian Agricultural and Rural Development Act Branch in 1968, for example, Pierre-Yves Pépin indulges in a number of

unsubstantiated generalizations in order to explain the lack of economic development in Inverness County. Setting up a dichotomy between the local French Acadians and Highland Scots, Pépin characterizes the former as "cheerful and outgoing, active, industrious, sociable" and the latter "gloomy and withdrawn, listless, creatures of habits, individualistic and attached to the land"(1968, 111).

While much of his analysis is atavistic, given that it attempts to connect supposed ancestral traits to contemporary realities, Pépin goes a step further claiming that, "The Scottish immigrants came from a primitive society" and their descendants "have no community spirit" (1968, 76). Employing imagery that diminishes their agency in the emigration process—and implying they had learned little in six generations of island residency—Pépin summarizes his take on their history by writing:

.... dislodged and herded on board sailing ships, they were then thrown onto the Atlantic coast, without financial resources and without any particular skills. Knowing nothing about fishing, and being also poor farmers, they isolated themselves in the interior of Cape Breton Island, earning a bare subsistence, with their backs turned to the sea. Emigration has been a hypodermic. The livelier elements have emigrated, and resignation and individualism now characterize those who are left. They live an archaic way of life with a low standard of living. (1968, 222)

Despite the pernicious nature of pejorative stereotypes and factual inaccuracies found in some academic writing, their effect on the popular image of the Gaels in Nova Scotia has been relatively benign compared with the romantic and essentialist image consciously constructed and promoted by the provincial government during the twentieth century. Now called tartanism, this process was fueled by economic interests and the tourist trade (McKay 1992). Ian McKay points out that public perceptions of the provincial landscapes were even reshaped through this process, with parts of the region rebranded as the Highlands (1992, 23-24).

Though it ostensibly gave pride of place to the Scots—assigning them a prominence greater than their demographic strength—its iconography—characterized by tartans, Highland dancing, and pipe bands—was largely foreign and often fabricated. Local cultural realities and the needs of contemporary tradition bearers were ignored. Indeed, as Ian McKay concedes, “Tartanism exploited Gaelic as one of its raw materials. It did not sustain it” (1992; 35). Instead, Gaelic was portrayed as ancient and romantic but doomed to extinction. The rural, romantic, anti-modern focus of this movement had much in common with long standing tropes about ‘the Folk’.

Ironically, one of the vehicles that propelled this cultural intervention was the Gaelic College. Established to promote the language and culture of Highland immigrants, the college soon became a “strange tartan fantasia” (MacKay 1992: 87) that undermined local traditions by embracing contemporary musical styles and popular stereotypes from Scotland. As Michael Kennedy points out, those in charge quickly “set about introducing one ‘Scottish’ expert after another to help educate local people in the error of their ways” (2002, 181). Not only did this contribute to the marginalization of more traditional forms of instrumental music and dance—as well as internally directed cultural adaptations—it promoted an inaccurate view of their historic role in Nova Scotia.

Though major changes have since occurred at the Gaelic College, the fact remains that over the course of several decades cultural interventionists there and elsewhere were remarkably successful in shaping public opinion about the nature of Scottish identity in Nova Scotia; promoting cultural traditions, such as clan tartans and Highland dancing, which had previously been foreign to the cultural experience of most Gaels, while ignoring local forms of the same and minimizing the role of Gaelic. This interpretation also obscured the major cultural, linguistic and historical differences

between Highland and Lowland Scots, presenting an amalgam more palatable to commercial interests.

Traditions evolve over time, but a difference exists between unique, internally directed adaptations and generic externally imposed ones. In this case, there was a deliberate, government-supported effort to shape public consciousness about Scottish identity in Nova Scotia. Community consultation was not a priority. Yet in some ways, the rise of tartanism was facilitated by the nature of Gaelic culture in Nova Scotia.

Even in areas where they once formed the linguistic core, Gaels could be considered an invisible majority. Their most distinctive cultural characteristics were intangible, often hidden from view through feelings of shame or inadequacy. Tartanism filled this vacuum, providing colourful visual evidence of Scottish identity in ways that avoided conflicting with assimilatory goals. Indeed, as Michael Newton notes, “Whatever else it may be from other perspectives, tartanism is a phenomenon which reflects the subordinate status of Gaeldom as a whole in the British polity and its corresponding inability to maintain its own cultural resources on its own terms” (2015, 73-74).

To be sure, tartanism also proved an accessible form of cultural expression for a growing number of people deprived of their traditional language and culture through acculturation. A sense of belonging was now commercially available; attained through participation in imported musical and dance traditions or purchased in the form of kilts and ties at local gift-shops. Perhaps for that reason—and despite its waning influence—tartanism continues to exert a pull for many people today, bringing to mind what David Whisnant has written: “one of the paradoxes of intervention-induced cultural change is its very durability and the degree to which imported forms and styles are accepted and defended by local people whose actual cultural traditions they altered or displaced” (1995, 100).

1.4 An Internal Perspective

Although fewer than five hundred native speakers now remain in Nova Scotia, the picture is not nearly as gloomy it might initially appear. In recent years the number of language learners has expanded rapidly and public demand has prompted a number of progressive initiatives aimed at language renewal in the region, including the establishment of an Office of Gaelic Affairs within the provincial government. More importantly, although local traditions have been marginalized, they were never entirely displaced. Since cultural interventionists rarely paid much attention to oral traditions, for instance, tradition bearers continue to shape, to one degree or another, local perceptions of the past and present in Gaelic Nova Scotia. For that reason fieldwork with contemporary residents provides the opportunity to understand residents on their own terms.

Richard Dorson explains why this is so important:

History as written by historians usually has little relation to the historical tradition orally preserved by people. Such traditions have a value for revealing what episodes of the past endure and what forms they take in popular memory unaided by the crutch of print and the catechism of the schoolmaster. They may also fill in gaps in the historical records, although of course historical fact needs to be sifted from folklore tradition. (1971, 147)

Of course, the value of oral traditions extends beyond this particular group and place.

Consider legends, for example. Rudolf Schenda argues they provide the socio-historical context necessary to understand the history of sixty to eighty percent of the population otherwise ignored by official history (1982, 186). Jan Brunvand underscores this possibility when he notes that a legend is transmitted not because “its factual content can be affirmed or disapproved but because it satisfies and dramatizes a real set of attitudes which in and of themselves are seldom if ever scrutinized or verbalized” (1981). Regardless of the theoretical approach they employ, folklorists recognize that narratives can provide important insights into the communities that maintain them, containing variable meanings that can be understood on multiple levels.

Convinced the symbolism maintained in songs, stories and traditional practices reflects repressed thoughts and desires, some folklorists employ psychological theory to examine the meaning and function of folklore in society. James Taggart, for instance, takes a psychoanalytic approach to exploring folktales in Spain and what they reveal about gender relations and roles concluding, “Storytelling is the process of creating cultural reality through symbols” (1990, 219). Drawing on ethnographic research in the same country, Stanley Brandes takes the same approach to examine social hierarchies and masculinity (1980).

Bengt Holbek uses a variety of theoretical approaches to understand a collection of folktales from nineteenth century Denmark (1987). In his analysis, Holbek takes into account the social, historical and cultural context in which the tales were collected in order to better understand how a contemporary audience would have interpreted them. He concludes that the inclusion of magical elements allows them to address social issues too fraught to speak about openly in an intimate peasant society, writing, “The tales solve the problem of dealing with these matters by treating them as if they were events in a purely fictitious world and by disguising the participants, whereas the nature of the conflicts is hardly disguised at all” (1987, 49). Exploring how narratives from the past serve as moral guideposts in the present, Julie Cruikshank points out the layered meanings oral traditions accumulate over time in an indigenous community in the Yukon (1990). Closer to home, Barbara Rieti has made clear the important insights multi-disciplinary analysis can provide stories and beliefs about fairies (2004) and witches (2008).

Despite a narrative turn in social sciences which has inspired narrative analysis from a variety of methodological perspectives, Dell Hymes notes a continued tendency among social scientists "to depreciate narrative as a form of knowledge, and personal narrative particularly, in contrast to other forms of discourse considered scholarly, scientific, technical, or the like"

(Cazden and Hymes 1978, 24). Indeed, it seems incomprehensible that some scholars, while attempting to record the history of a community in which oral traditions were the primary means of transmitting historical learning, have continued to dismiss this material out of hand.

The central role oral traditions played in the preservation of historical and cultural knowledge in this community makes the collection and publication of this material necessary to the development of an accurate historical, intellectual and profile of Scottish Gaels in Canada (Bennett 2003, xii). More to the point, a history of marginalization and stereotyping means that bringing this perspective to light is essential to assessing the meaning of land in Gaelic Nova Scotia. Indeed, if our goal is to understand its members on their own terms the written word cannot be accorded priority over the human voice, as Barre Toelken argues: “.... any historical or cultural analysis which leaves out the vernacultural material will simply provide an inaccurate, incomplete account of cultural reality” (1990, 27).

Fortunately, scholars from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds have made important contributions to the preservation of songs, stories, and oral history in Gaelic Nova Scotia. Taken as a whole, this material demonstrates the richness of the local tradition, provides evidence for contemporary research, and informs directions for future study. For these reasons, the next chapter provides an overview of ethnographic fieldwork in Gaelic Nova Scotia.

Chapter Two

Previous Fieldwork in Gaelic Nova Scotia

While it would be virtually impossible to assess all the sources that describe the history and culture of Gaelic Nova Scotia, and evaluating even a fraction of the literature associated with place and space is equally unfeasible, the narrower focus and relative lack of resources makes it possible to summarize the history of fieldwork in Gaelic Nova Scotia. Stephanie Conn, for example, provides an excellent overview in her PhD dissertation (2012, 177-218).

Since the most distinctive feature of this community is its language, most fieldwork has reflected this reality and focused on oral traditions. In this regard, professional research has a long and fruitful history in Gaelic Scotland. John F. Campbell, John G. Campbell, Alexander Carmichael, and Frances Tolmie initiated much of this work in the second part of the nineteenth century (Dorson 1968; Hilliers 2007; Kennedy 2002). The School of Scottish Studies, at the University of Edinburgh, continued these efforts in the years following World War II. Encouraged by Alan Lomax, and inspired by the example of the Irish Folklore Commission, the school was home to scholars such as Calum MacLean, Alan Bruford and Donald Archie MacDonald (Bruford and MacDonald 1994). These and other ethnologists amassed an archive of international importance at the school and helped ensure its contents were made available to the public through numerous print and record publications.

Similar efforts came later and have been less consistent in the parallel community of Highland settlers established in Nova Scotia. This hardly means local traditions were ignored prior to the arrival of professional folklorists in the twentieth century. Directed from within the community, early collecting efforts were aimed at local publications. Songs and stories were

gathered not because of their importance to academics or archives, but because of their intrinsic interest to Scottish Gaels.

Rev. Alexander MacLean Sinclair was an early exponent of such work whose efforts have been described by Michael Linkletter (2006). Sinclair was a grandson of John MacLean, popularly known as the Bard MacLean. Upon his death, Sinclair inherited two manuscripts of poetry from his grandfather, the former bard to the Laird of Coll. In order to make their contents available to the public, Sinclair had large parts of these manuscripts published (See, for example, 1881, 1901, 1910).

Importantly, the learned minister was equally committed to preserving songs maintained in oral tradition. Sinclair collected extensively from friends and family, often publishing the results alongside the manuscript material. Though he sometimes omitted or altered texts he found objectionable—he was, after all, a Victorian-era Presbyterian minister—Sinclair played a pivotal role in the collection and preservation of oral traditions in Nova Scotia.

Locally produced periodicals did much the same. The most famous example—and the one to which all others is compared—is *MacTalla* (The Echo). Published in Cape Breton between 1892 and 1904, it was edited by Jonathan G. MacKinnon. While it culled some material from published sources in Scotland, the paper also made room for items collected from tradition bearers in Nova Scotia, including songs, oral history and letters to the editor. In so doing, it created a unique record of their expertise and interests at the dawn of the twentieth century.

Though none would be as successful, or consistent, other periodicals would follow this model. In fact, between 1922 and 1928, three papers, written partly or mostly in Gaelic, were launched in Cape Breton: *Mosgladh* (Awakening), *Fear na Cèilidh* (The Visitor), and *Teachdaire nan Gaidheal* (The Gaelic Herald). By this time, however, the future of the Gaelic

language was increasingly uncertain. Within another generation intergenerational transmission would effectively come to an end in Nova Scotia. Perhaps sensing this impending shift, written works increasingly went from informational to preservationist. This goal was made explicit in *Teachdaire nan Gaidheal*, which called itself a newspaper “...devoted to the study and revival of the Gaelic language.”

Fortunately, professional efforts to document the local tradition also began during this period. Though he was primarily interested in African Nova Scotian traditions, Arthur Huff Fauset interviewed people from a variety of cultural backgrounds during a visit to the region. In a book resulting from fieldwork, the African American scholar also published a story in Gaelic (1931, 36). In spite of its highly irregular orthography, the tale is noteworthy: it appears to be the first Gaelic narrative collected by a professional folklorist in Nova Scotia. More substantial contributions would soon follow.

Born in Scotland, John Lorne Campbell was the first person to make audio recordings in Gaelic Nova Scotia. While studying Rural Economy at Oxford University, Campbell nurtured his interest in Scottish Gaelic language and literature. Shortly after his graduation in 1932, he traveled to Canada. In addition to making an impressive number of contacts in Nova Scotia, Campbell conducted the first informal census of Gaelic speakers in the region by sending out questionnaires to clergy regarding language use in their parishes. Their responses provide a unique and evocative glimpse of the language shortly before widespread language shift.

Impressed with the vitality of the tradition he encountered, Campbell returned to the province five years later. Accompanied by his wife, Margaret Faye Shaw—an eminent collector in her own right—Campbell brought an Ediphone recording machine. During several weeks spent in the region, the couple collected more than a hundred songs (Campbell 1990, 2—3).

Time and again, they were struck by the conservative nature of the tradition they encountered and its ability to retain oral traditions from specific parts of Scotland:

It is enough to say that the identity of the tradition, over a hundred years of complete separation, was astonishing...There were quite a few old songs our Cape Breton friends sung to us that we had not heard at home: but on going through them with Barra friends, I find that most of them had heard them at one time or another. (Campbell 1990: 46-47)

Although this was not the last visit the pair would make to the province, a full account of their work in the region, and the songs they collected, was not published until 1990 (Campbell 1990). In the decades that followed, John Lorne Campbell also made tremendous contribution to folklore collection efforts in Gaelic Scotland, with Margaret Bennett arguing that his “many publications can stand unchallenged in the twentieth century as far as enverry and output are concerned” (1997, 129). Though Campbell and Shaw were not professional academics, they were scholarly, educated and deeply committed to sensitive and thorough fieldwork casting long shadows on both sides of the Atlantic.

Charles Dunn was another pioneer in the professional documentation of oral traditions in Gaelic Nova Scotia. Born in Scotland, Dunn received his early education in Aberdeen and Edinburgh. As a doctoral student, he studied Celtic language, literature and folklore at Harvard University. In 1941, Dunn travelled to Nova Scotia to assess the state of its Gaelic language and culture. Encouraged by what he found, Dunn returned the next year on a Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship. Over the course of several months, he travelled extensively making recordings of songs and stories. In 1953, while teaching at the University of Toronto, Dunn published the results of his research in *Highland Settler*.

Unfortunately, a more generalized interest in the local tradition made for a less detailed analysis of its components. For example, Dunn writes about oral narratives as if they were no longer extant: “...the practiced reciters have vanished from the land and the tales themselves can

be recollected only by few“ (1991, 45). Such a pronouncement was clearly premature. Despite this shortcoming, Dunn produced an engaging, accessible and well-rounded ethnography that succeeds in capturing the essence of the community in a way few others have done.

The first professional folklorist to come to the province to record Gaelic oral traditions was MacEdward Leach. Employed at the University of Pennsylvania, Leach often vacationed in Nova Scotia, where his wife was raised. Curious about its Gaelic heritage, he submitted a research proposal to the Library of Congress and began fieldwork in Cape Breton in 1950. In the following, Duncan Emrich, the library’s archival director, provides a rationale for their support: “It is of importance to add to our collections additional songs in this rapidly disappearing language. Some of the songs go as far back as Ossian and other early poets” (Emrich to Spivacke, 1949).

As this excerpt suggests, fieldwork was already considered salvage ethnography by mid century. A scholar of medieval literature, MacEdward Leach hoped to collect archaic oral traditions in Nova Scotia. Like Sharp and Karpeles in Appalachia, he suspected such remnants would be found on the periphery of a given cultural region. In the end, he appears to have been disappointed. In the only article resulting from this fieldwork, Leach describes the area as home to a fragmentary and moribund oral tradition, claiming only the elderly were able to recall traditional songs and stories in Gaelic (1957, 41). Though he does not identify it directly, Leach appears to depict the early effects of language erosion, yet it seems doubtful the process was as advanced as he suggests.

Because certain elements of the oral tradition are irrevocably linked to language, some of those he interviewed may simply have found it too difficult to translate for Leach. Fenian tales, for instance, were traditionally considered the domain of storytelling specialists and rarely

translated into English (MacNeil 1987; xxiii). Likewise, Hector Campbell, a tradition bearer Leach interviewed in Judique, “could remember the tales only in Gaelic, though he spoke English” (Leach 1957, 42). Could an inability to translate material have been mistaken for a failure to recall it?

To be sure, without any knowledge of the language, Leach was at a distinct disadvantage. In fact, considering these obstacles, he fared quite well. During his visit to the island Leach recorded a variety of songs and oral narratives. Many of the songs he collected were fairly recent compositions, detailing important events in the everyday life of the community. Ironically, considering his initial research goals, this material shows the continued growth and development of Gaelic traditions in Nova Scotia.

Because most early scholars sought out older elements of the local tradition, such as complex tales and songs, material that demonstrates the continued evolution of the narrative tradition is sorely lacking in those collections. Mary Fraser was an early folklorist who stepped out of this mold. Focusing on genres that transferred effortlessly to English—local legends, for instance—Fraser collected in English from tradition bearers in various parts of eastern Nova Scotia and Cape Breton Island. Though her work suffers from the romanticism and lack of contextual content typical of early folklore research, it remains valuable and has recently been re-published with an introduction by Ian Brodie (Fraser 2009).

Helen Creighton had few expectations when she first travelled to Cape Breton, expressing surprise at hearing so many songs in French and Gaelic (Creighton and MacLeod 1964, ix). Committed to reflecting the varied traditions of her participants, Creighton recorded this material whenever the opportunity arose. Years later, she described how this open-minded fieldwork technique resulted in a growing collection of Gaelic material: “No trip was made to

collect Gaelic songs specifically, but there were always some put on tapes. Consequently, they were all scattered through my recorded collections – a few here, a few there” (1964, x).

While working for the National Museum of Canada, Creighton decided to publish some of this material. Unable to transcribe or translate the songs herself, she contacted Major Calum MacLeod, who taught Celtic Studies at St. Francis Xavier University. Though eminently capable, MacLeod was from Scotland and somewhat unfamiliar with the Gaelic singing style maintained in Nova Scotia. In her doctoral dissertation, Stephanie Conn argues this likely affected his attitudes towards this material:

As a former prizewinner at the Scottish National Mod, his taste would have been influenced by the aesthetics of this event. His judgment of quality would likely have been influenced by his education and experience in communities and universities in Scotland rather than by local aesthetics in Cape Breton communities. Although he clearly was involved in Gaelic education on several levels, which is in itself a good thing, MacLeod seemed to have been one of those who continued to privilege Gaelic culture as it was practiced in the Old Country over Gaelic culture in the New World. (2012, 211)

Nevertheless, MacLeod encouraged Creighton to continue recording Gaelic songs, and to return to singers whose repertoires were poorly represented in previous recordings (1964 x). Their combined efforts were published in 1964. Containing nearly a hundred songs, but featuring little in the way of contextual information, *Gaelic Songs in Nova Scotia* remains a popular reference book for singers in the province today.

Perhaps this experience also inspired MacLeod. Five years later, he published *Sgialachdan a Albainn Nuaidh* [Folktales from Nova Scotia] (MacLeod 1969). Originally available only in Gaelic, MacLeod later translated the book into English. While it contains a wide range of stories collected from oral tradition, MacLeod re-wrote them all, providing little information about the tradition bearers from whom he learned and compromising their value to later scholars. Fortunately, the most sustained and organized research was yet to come.

Funded by the Multiculturalism Directorate of the Government of Canada, the Cape Breton Gaelic Folklore Collection was based at St. Francis Xavier University and resulted in hundreds of recordings featuring a broad range of oral traditions, including songs, stories and oral history. Initiated by Sr. Margaret MacDonell, a native Gaelic speaker from Inverness County and graduate of the Celtic Studies Department at Harvard University, fieldwork was carried out by John Shaw, a doctoral student in the same department. Between 1977 and 1982 Shaw conducted interviews with participants across the island. Two of these became especially important: Joe Neil MacNeil and Lauchie MacLellan were exceptional tradition bearers. Recognizing their potential, Shaw engaged them as full-time, paid participants.

The Cape Breton Gaelic Folklore Collection exposed a regional repertoire that directly paralleled that of the Western Highlands of Scotland (Shaw 2007, 58). Hundreds of complete and fragmentary tales were recorded, as were more than a thousand Gaelic songs. From the beginning, MacDonell and Shaw understood the importance of making material available in print. To that end, they edited a short collection of folktales told by Hector Campbell (Campbell 1981). This was the same tradition bearer MacEdward Leach had described as being unable to translate his tales into English. By working with him in Gaelic, Shaw and MacDonell were able to engage his full potential.

Since that time, MacDonell and Shaw have continued to make important contributions to the documentation of traditions in Gaelic Nova Scotia. Building on her PhD dissertation, MacDonell has examined Gaelic songs composed by emigrants from Scotland (1982) while Shaw has edited three books drawn from his extensive fieldwork experience in Cape Breton (MacNeil 1987, MacLellan 2000, Shaw 2007). In recent years, recordings made by the Cape Breton Gaelic Folklore Project have been digitized and made available online.

In reviewing the history of folklore research in Gaelic Nova Scotia, a few themes emerge. Nineteenth century efforts to document the oral traditions were directed from within the community. In this regard, Rev. Alexander MacLean Sinclair and Jonathan G. MacKinnon were especially influential. During the twentieth century, cultural insiders such as Monsignor Patrick Nicholson, James H. MacNeil, and Sr. Margaret MacDonell continued to exert a strong impact. Sister Margaret Beaton was a particularly active and influential collector. A native Gaelic speaker from Inverness County, Beaton used her position as college librarian to record tradition bearers around the island between 1957 and 1975. In fact, her work was the genesis of the Beaton Institute, an archive of great regional importance, now housed at Cape Breton University.

Increasingly, however, local residents acted as liaisons between tradition bearers and scholars from outside the community. Jonathan G. MacKinnon and Msgr. Nicholson, for instance, provided direction to John Lorne Campbell while Monsignor Nicholson assisted MacEward Leach. As in folklore research elsewhere, their work was characterized by a sense of desperation. Writing in 1949, Monsignor Nicholson confessed that: “My impression is that in ten more years there will be nothing left” (Quoted in Conn 2012, 189).

For obvious reasons, given its threatened status and rich oral tradition, most fieldwork has focused on residents who speak Gaelic. There are good reasons for this emphasis. Some material, including songs and complex tales, are inextricably linked to language and for that reason are particularly vulnerable to language erosion. At the same time, this approach has obscured the potential contributions of younger residents, who generally do not speak the language, and have been largely ignored as a result. This is unfortunate since many remain capable of providing valuable insights into the cultural and historical processes at work in Gaelic Nova Scotia.

Because they are accessible at some level to those without the language, most scholars have focused on songs. Helen Creighton, Laura Boulton, Sidney Robertson Cowell and Ralph Rinzler, for instance, each made impressive contributions without any knowledge of Gaelic. MacEdward Leach is the only folklorist who came to the region expressly to record narratives he could not understand. His experience makes clear the frustrations inherent in such work.

Perhaps this also contributed to a lack of interdisciplinary collaboration in Gaelic Nova Scotia. With the notable absence of Helen Creighton and Mary Fraser, Canadian folklorists have rarely been active in this community. More troubling are the uninformed assumptions that have characterized some of their work. At the height of the Cape Breton Gaelic Folklore Project, for example, when hundreds of tales were being collected, folklorist Carole Carpenter claimed that in Cape Breton “Few Gaelic stories are to be found in tradition now...” (1979, 551)

British and American academics, including Charles Dunn, Kenneth Jackson, Gordon MacLennan, Kathleen Lamont MacKinnon, John Shaw, and Kenneth Nilsen each spoke Gaelic and worked in various Departments of Celtic and Scottish Studies. Given their facility in the language, they were able to make the most significant contributions to the documentation and preservation of the local tradition since the mid twentieth century. Jim Watson has also played a vital role. Director of Interpretation at the Nova Scotia Highland Village Museum, Watson has published widely in a variety of publications, mostly aimed at language learners, including the periodical *Am Braighe*.

Many scholars have been keen to demonstrate how historic songs and stories have been retained in the region, exploring their origins and illustrating their links to Scotland. An interest in the stability of the local tradition and its ability to retain songs and stories over generations is not surprising given the high degree of cultural conservatism in this community; indeed, many

participants appear to consider substantiating such links as one of the most interesting and gratifying skills possessed by folklorists.

Increasingly, however, scholars have also asked valuable questions about the meaning this material possesses to residents. Exploring the symbolic significance of stories that depict how the Gaels met the Mi'kmaq, for instance, Michael Newton concludes that such tales "...explain their origins, assert the resilience of members in the face of difficult conditions, and provide a sort of charter myth justifying the existence of communities" (2011, 95). Building on this example, my thesis attempts to expand on the foundation laid by others while probing the deeper significance of oral traditions in Gaelic Nova Scotia. The next chapter outlines my role in this process.

Chapter Three

Methodology

When does fieldwork start? Is it when the recorder comes out? Or perhaps after the release forms are signed? The reality, as far as I can tell, is that fieldwork is a continual learning process in which knowledge accrues over time. Important insights are as likely to come from brief encounters during the course of daily life as interviews planned days in advance. For this reason, my thesis draws on more than a decade of research into the oral traditions of Gaelic Nova Scotia. While much of this work was informal, conducted on holidays, and without external funding, it also produced ideas, recordings and friendships that guide the present study, prompting me to undertake a doctoral degree in the first place and inspiring my thesis topic.

My work draws on a broad range of perspectives in order to explore how Scottish Gaels have perceived, described, and experienced land in Nova Scotia. While fieldwork with native speakers has been vital, interviews with language learners, and area residents with an interest in local history, have also been instructive. Most language learners have spent extensive periods of time with native speakers, paying special attention to local stories and songs in Gaelic. As a result, they are embedded in the community but alert to what makes it distinctive. In a similar way, oral history and historical legends, which form a prominent part of this work, have survived language shift and remain an important way local residents remember their history. Consequently, community members who are interested in local history and culture—and who are often only a generation removed from the language in the first place—are capable of providing valuable insights into the cultural and historical processes at work in Gaelic Nova Scotia.

As it happens, I first came to know some of the people consulted in this work through Gaelic, visiting them in order to advance my own fluency and building personal connections in

the process. I was never a complete stranger to the area though. My parents come from Cape Breton, and I spent extended periods of time there while growing up in Halifax. My wife is also from the island, and we have made it our home at various times over the past decade. To some insiders, I am likely an outsider; to some outsiders, I am probably an insider. Regardless of my status, I like to consider myself a friend; someone with more than an academic interest in the community, its residents, language and culture.

My familiarity with the area and its residents facilitated the fieldwork required for this thesis by streamlining the process of identifying potential participants, earning their trust and encouraging their participation. Sometimes I arranged interviews with participants knowing their interests and cultural expertise in advance. In these cases, fieldwork was focused and deliberate from the start, often aiming to record specific items shared with me informally in the past.

Friendships in the region also helped expand my pool of contributors, as one resident was able to assure another that I could be trusted. Likewise, my previous participation in community festivals, both as a participant and guest speaker, provided some participants with an idea of my work and its potential uses. In areas where I had not previously conducted interviews, friends who were familiar with the region recommended people with whom I might be able to speak.

In general, I invited potential participants to participate over the phone or during personal visits. This informal approach to recruitment, consistent with local ways of soliciting assistance and advice, was used in order to ensure my work was not construed as intimidating, or self-important, and that residents felt comfortable and confident taking part. Like Clifford Geertz, I have not sought to ‘become native’ through this research (Geertz 1973, 13). Indeed, my interests, work and goals have often set me apart. At the same time, I am not willing to construct artificial walls between participants and me either. Instead, my goal has been to tread the line

between insider and outsider, aware that a difference often exists between what tradition bearers tell scholars with brief superficial connections to a given community, and what is revealed to those embedded in it (Cromwell and Ooozevaseuk 2006, 40).

Like Erika Friedl, I believe the better we get to know a community and its tradition bearers, the more layers of meaning we can discern in their stories (Friedl 2004, 8). Ideally, my role should not feel entirely unfamiliar to residents. As Henry Glassie suggests, at its core, fieldwork builds on a long tradition: “I am an outsider. I use a machine rather than my mind. But the situation is not strange; it is natural and right for a younger man to gather and store the treasures from the past he holds in trust for an uncaring future” (1982, 115).

In the end, I produced fifteen recordings over two months in late 2015: ten videos and five audio recordings. Recordings made through my recent fieldwork range from one to two hours in length. While this material forms the core of the current study, recordings made during my previous research in the region have been used to complement this data when appropriate and in accordance with the conditions outlined in the ICEHR (Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research).

Though each contributor was given an overview of my research, specific questions were not discussed in advance in order to ensure the interviews remained flexible and responses were not pre-planned. While all the participants speak English, most interviews were conducted at least partly in Gaelic when possible. Creating a record of the language as spoken in the region today is important for historical, cultural and linguistic reasons. In addition, because my previous research has shown that many small geographic features are known only through Gaelic, conducting interviews in that language was intended to encourage place names to surface as natural components of the conversation (MacDonald 2013, 215).

Advocates of linguistic relativism, a theory developed by Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf, argue that language shapes the way people see the world. Though the degree to which this occurs is contested, in a study that aims to explore perceptions of land maintained by Gaels, recording impressions in Gaelic, the first language of many of those consulted, takes on special significance. As James Spradley notes, “Language is more than a means of communication about reality: it is a tool for constructing reality” (1979, 17). Perhaps for this reason, Keith Basso suggests that, “.... language and culture must be studied hand in hand. Our knowledge of one can only enhance our knowledge of the other” (1996, 70). On a more personal level, participants also appeared to appreciate the effort of conducting interviews in Gaelic, and engendering goodwill is always worthwhile in fieldwork.

Though participant observation has an important role to play in most ethnographic fieldwork, my study relies largely on recorded interviews. Indeed, collaboration with contemporary residents is a hallmark of my work. In this regard, I used the three separate fieldwork techniques described below. To be clear, different approaches were used to solicit related material from tradition bearers. Since my thesis focuses on the stories, perspectives, and opinions tradition bearers shared with me—not how they surfaced—I have not segregated this material based on how it was collected, but presented it as a whole. Not only does this make a more cohesive study, I would argue it more accurately reflects the interrelated nature of the local oral tradition too. The following describes my different fieldwork techniques.

3.1 Fieldwork Techniques:

1) Semi-structured interviews helped create an atmosphere in which participants were empowered to guide interviews in directions that they deemed important. In order to provide the mental space to do this, I restricted myself to key questions on topics such as settlement, local

place names, and land usage. I then responded with additional questions based on the responses they provided.

Though broadly related, questions were designed to reflect the personal and professional background of each participant. As a result, questions directed at participants with professional links to Gaelic language and culture were somewhat different from those posed to participants without this background. In this way, a broad range of material was recorded, from accounts of clever moonshiners and their knowledge of the woods to recommendations of books and articles related to my research.

The flexibility of my approach to interviews was especially useful in cases where I had not met the participant before since it provided the space necessary for their personal interests and expertise to surface. Indeed, by maintaining an informal and conversational atmosphere during interviews, participants were able to fall into the familiar routine of a *cèilidh*—typically an informal visit at home—in which traditional knowledge has long been shared and cultural competencies naturally come to the fore.

Such an approach makes sense in ethnographic studies. Writing from an Indigenous perspective, Margaret Kovach argues that, “Highly structured interviews are not congruent with accessing knowledges that imbue both the fluidity and regulation of the storyteller’s role within oral tradition...”(2009, 123). Henry Glassie also advocates an open, collaborative, and attentive approach to fieldwork when he claims that: “Ethnography is interaction, collaboration. What it demands is not hypotheses, which may unnaturally close study down, obscuring the integrity of the other, but the ability to converse intimately” (1982, 14).

2) Because land, place and space form such critical components of this study, I wanted to include *in situ* fieldwork as part of my research. Other scholars have described how seeing a

place can trigger memories of it (Martin 1984, 9). In her work with a First Nation elder, for instance, Julie Cruikshank found that, “Often it was difficult for her to remember the name of a place until she actually saw it again, and naming those places had the mnemonic effect of recalling events that had occurred there” (1990, 22).

At the same time, given the expansive nature of the areas concerned, and the advanced age of some of my participants, walking tours and site visits were not usually feasible. As a result, I drove tradition bearers through the area under investigation and asked about the places they passed, including any historical and personal significance they possessed. By mounting a camcorder to the dash of the car an audio-visual record was produced. Not only did this create a permanent link between place names, narratives and topography in the region, these recordings facilitated the later production of maps—one of which is included here.

3) In order to elicit memories of features of the natural and built landscape that are no longer extant, or inaccessible because of forest growth, and gain a sense of the informal boundaries that once defined these communities, I asked some participants to draw a map of the area in which they were raised, based largely on the area where they visited regularly. As they drew, tradition bearers were encouraged to share memories, stories and place names associated with locations included in their work. A camcorder recorded this process.

The maps produced were not intended to be artistic or realistic—though some certainly were. Instead, their production was a tactile exercise designed to stimulate memories and narratives. Highly individualistic, the maps produced often focus on small, minor aspects of the landscape, recording places of personal and social significance for community members. Indeed, as artist Marlene Creates notes, the creation of ‘memory maps’ reveals more about human experience than spatial reality (1997, 13). As it happens, technique proved the most variable in

terms of results. While some participants appeared to enjoy the exercise, others were surprisingly reluctant to participate. One tradition bearer asked a family member to draw the map, providing detailed guidance along the way. Another insisted I draw the map, according to their instructions. In at least one case, it seems likely this related to a lack of literacy and subsequent lack of confidence with pens and paper.

3.2 The Participants:

Because my research sought perspectives from native Gaelic speakers and community members closely connected to the local Gaelic tradition, most participants featured in this study were middle aged or elderly when they were recorded. However, three language learners and instructors, including a woman in her thirties, were also recorded. Their contributions are noteworthy since each has made a sustained, professional contribution to language revitalization efforts in Nova Scotia. They also demonstrate that, despite popular opinion to the contrary, tradition bearers need not be elderly. Interest and exposure are undoubtedly more important in that regard. Indeed, as Henry Glassie notes, “Culture is not owned equally. Some have thought harder than others and sought wisdom with more energy” (1982, 644). My work refers to these people as tradition bearers since this term is widely employed in Gaelic Nova Scotia, and because I recognize traditional knowledge is dynamic and evolving and shared by young and old alike.

As it happens, language learners are increasingly being thrust into the role of active tradition bearers in this community, maintaining as they do aspects of traditional local culture being lost through acculturation. Older residents frequently encourage this role since they see little merit in sharing their talents with those unwilling to take up the mantle in return. For this reason, advanced learners are regularly called upon to share what they have learned with other

community members in ways both formal and informal. This provides a kind of insider status to some language learners since they have built bonds with older members of the community and speak a language the majority of younger residents do not understand.

Despite maintaining a language and culture lost through acculturation and assimilation elsewhere, this community has never been frozen in time, nor should its residents be considered romantic characters from a bygone era. Indeed, the situation calls to mind how Jim Griffiths describes residents of the Pimeria Alta in Arizona: "The participants in the cultural patterns I have been describing, the tellers of the legends, the carriers of the beliefs, all occupy precisely the same corner of the twentieth century as do the rest of us" (1992, 179). At the same time, many of the places my thesis describes exist now only in memory; not only because language erosion means conversations about Gaelic often revert to the past, but because, as Edward Relph writes, "...the places of childhood constitute vital reference points for many individuals" (1976, 35).

While my research draws on the talents of both genders, the best-known tradition bearers in this community are men. Male dominance in public storytelling has been described in many regions including Ireland (Glassie 1982), Spain (Taggart 1990) and Newfoundland, where Barbara Rieti observed, "It seems that men acquire a reputation for story-telling more often than women, and are more likely to put themselves forward to be interviewed" (1991, 214). Closer to home, Ranald Thurgood also noted that men were more readily distinguished as storytellers in Gabarus and Framboise, an area settled by Protestant Gaels in eastern Cape Breton (1999, 7).

Though they share a common culture and regional identity, each of the participants included in this study is different from the next, possessing a range of personal experiences and perspectives. Like Julie Cruikshank, I believe the individuality of participants too often has been

suppressed in ethnographic profiles as their words are made to stand for an entire community, “as though the speaker were merely some kind of information conduit” (1998, 40-41).

For this reason, I have chosen to identify—with permission—all those who speak in this work. They have molded its development as much as any scholar cited and are credited the same way. The following biographical details are supplied in order to contextualize the contributions of participants who were recorded for this project during September and October 2015 and August and September 2016. Additional tradition bearers, recorded for other projects at other times, are introduced as required.

‘Wild’ Allan Bonnar: A commercial fisherman and resident of Meat Cove, ‘Wild’ Allan Bonner is a proud native of Black Point. His mother was a MacLellan who spoke Gaelic and taught him various words and phrases over the years. As comfortable in the woods as on the water, Bonnar keeps horses and cattle along a stretch of coastline overlooking the ocean. Fifty years ago a government program implemented the relocation of residents of Black Point. Today, Bonnar helps maintain the memory of this community through stories shared in person and through social media.

Mary Campbell: For seven generations now, the Campbells have called Glenora Falls home. Mary Campbell resides on the old family property and helps safeguard its history. She was raised in a family steeped in the local musical tradition. Her father was Dan J. Campbell, a renowned violinist, and one of the first local musicians to record under the Celtic Music Label in 1935. His sons, John and Donald, became celebrated violinists in their own right. Though she worked for a decade in the United States, Mary Campbell maintained strong ties with Cape Breton, and renewed ancestral ones in the Highlands of Scotland. Perhaps an older relative came

closest to defining her passion for history many years ago. When asked why his young cousin was so taken with old stories, he responded, “She was born closer to the mist.”

Roddie Farrell: Roddie Farrell lives in a modern bungalow on the old family property in Benacadie. His paternal ancestor came there from County Longford, Ireland, and was quickly subsumed into a community of Scottish Gaels. After his retirement from the local gypsum plant, Roddie took a job delivering the mail. Rarely idle, he also mows lawns and cuts hay during the summer months. A life-long bachelor with an abiding interest in local history, people have long sought out the healing touch ascribed to his status as a seventh son. Well versed in religious and political matters, Farrell is strongly supportive of his local community and neighbours.

Barrie Fraser: A well-known Inverness County artist, Barrie Fraser is also a knowledgeable tradition bearer. He has pursued an interest in local history and genealogy through interviews with friends and neighbours around Lake Ainslie, sharing much of this material in regular columns for *The Inverness Oran*. His mother, who spoke Gaelic, supported his own interest in the language. A graduate of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design in Halifax, Fraser lives and works in East Lake Ainslie, where he operates the Kirkwood Studio. He continues to document local history and family connections during his spare time.

Barry and Gary George: Though they spent the first part of their lives in the United States, Barry and Gary George have always been firmly rooted in Christmas Island. When their family moved back to the community years ago, the teenage brothers began spending extended periods of time with older neighbours in the area, learning local history in the process. Today, the middle-aged bachelors share a home with their mother, a native Gaelic speaker. They run a sawmill on the property, and work in the woods. Barry has a special interest in songs, and is an

active Gaelic learner. Gary is particularly interested in local history, combining knowledge of written works with material from the oral tradition. The brothers were interviewed together.

Archie Kerr: Raised on a farm in the beautiful Sunrise Valley, near Cape North, Archie Kerr has spent much of his working life in Sydney, where he married, raised a family, and resides today. His paternal ancestors came from Assynt, Scotland. His mother was from Big Intervale and she spoke Gaelic as a child. Gifted with a robust memory, Kerr is able to paint a vivid picture of community life during the first part of the twentieth century. Today, he maintains an interest in the community where he was raised, sometimes participating in events at the local museum.

Donnie MacDonald: Donnie MacDonald was brought up by his grandparents in Tarbot, a community settled primarily by immigrants from Lewis and Harris in the Outer Hebrides. As a young man he moved to Halifax, marrying and raising a family in Timberlea. After a varied career, the entrepreneur and heavy equipment operator began attending Gaelic classes in order to reconnect with the language he spoke during his youth in Cape Breton. Since that time, Donnie has become a valuable addition to a group of local learners, who appreciate his warm personality, humorous stories, and knowledge of Gaelic.

Jeff MacDonald: Raised in a family closely connected to the language and music of Gaelic Cape Breton, MacDonald took an active interest in learning the language as a teenager. Since that time, he has gone on to become fluent, passed the language on to his son Padruig, and gained a reputation as a knowledgeable and encouraging Gaelic instructor and activist. MacDonald holds a Master's Degree in Folklore from Memorial University and has conducted extensive fieldwork with tradition bearers around Gaelic Cape Breton. For the last several years,

he has been employed as the Gaelic Field Officer for the Nova Scotia Office of Gaelic Affairs. Deeply connected to the rural parish where he lives, MacDonald sings and composes in Gaelic.

Joanne MacIntyre: The youngest participant included in this study, MacIntyre is a Gaelic teacher with the provincial school system in Mabou. She was raised in Mabou Coal Mines, where her Lochabar progenitors settled generations ago, and where she chose to raise her own family. Gaelic was a regular part of her early life, as her father was a native speaker. Raised in a musical family, MacIntyre is well known as a Gaelic singer, often accompanied by her four sons. Several years ago she received the Big Sampie award at the Celtic Colours International Festival, which provided the incentive for her debut album of Gaelic songs, *Craobh a' Mhathain*.

Flora MacIsaac: During her youth in Rear Boisdale, Cape Breton County, Flora MacIsaac mainly spoke Gaelic. Though she never lost the language, in recent years she has made a concerted effort to maintain her fluency, going to local classes and conversations groups. She has also been a mentor to language learners in a local language revitalization program and visited South Uist, one of the islands from which her ancestors immigrated. A life-long resident of Boisdale, MacIsaac taught school, married, and raised a family in the community. She recently spent the winter writing about the community in which she was raised, its landmarks, residents and former way of life.

Derrick MacLennan: A proud resident of Meat Cove, Derrick MacLennan makes a welcoming ambassador to the small fishing village at the northern tip of Cape Breton. He was raised in the community by his grandparents, Simon George and Marcella MacLellan, whose first language was Gaelic. Today, MacLellan manages the local welcome centre, a short walk from his home, sometimes speaking to media on behalf of the community.

Allan MacLeod: A descendant of emigrants from Lewis, Allan MacLeod was born and raised in a Gaelic speaking home in New Boston, a farming community close to Louisbourg. A well-known singer, Allan learned most of his songs from his father. His distinctive voice and engaging personality made him a favourite at milling frolics around Cape Breton. MacLeod married and raised a family in Catalone, spending much of his working life as a carpenter at the Fortress of Louisbourg. He was recorded for this project a year before his death. Until the end, MacLeod claimed he was more comfortable speaking and thinking in Gaelic.

Fr. Allan MacMillan: Priest of the Diocese of Antigonish, Allan MacMillan is the author of several books of genealogy, including *To the Hill of Boisdale* and *A West Wind to East Bay*. In order to complete these collections, MacMillan spent extended periods of time working with local tradition bearers, learning songs, stories and history in the process. A highly regarded Gaelic singer, Fr. MacMillan is the director of the *Coisir an Eilein*, a Gaelic choir based in Inverness County. Today, Fr. MacMillan resides in the old glebe house in Judique, where he maintains an active ministry, comfortably surrounded by books and papers, mute testimony to a passion for history and genealogy.

Mickey John H. MacNeil: Born on a small farm near Iona, an area settled by immigrants from Barra, Mickey MacNeil is a talented tradition bearer with a gentle manner. After serving in the armed forces for several years, Mickey returned to Iona where he intended to replace the local storekeeper temporarily; he ended up buying the store and spent the next thirty years behind its counter. A long-time member of the church choir, MacNeil is a valued member of the Iona Gaelic Singers who regularly travels to milling frolics around the island. In recent years, he has also been a mentor in a language revitalization program in which he has been paired with young learners.

Martha Ramey: Martha Ramey and her six siblings were raised on a farm in Rear Big Pond. Music played an important part of their youth. Their mother played the chanter, their uncle was a well-known piper and their grandfather played the pipes and violin. Educated at home, Martha moved to Sydney as a young woman, married and had a family. An active volunteer at the hospital, she enjoys fiddle music and rarely misses a game featuring the Montreal Canadiens. Though most of her life has been spent in the city, Martha continues to speak Gaelic by preference and remains strongly connected to the rural community of her youth.

Jim Watson: Manager of Interpretation at the Nova Scotia Highland Village Museum, Jim Watson is a leading authority on Gaelic language and culture in Nova Scotia. He has spent decades learning from tradition bearers in the region, passing on their language, songs, and stories, as a teacher, author and language advocate. Watson has also taken a prominent role in the development and promotion of language acquisition programs in the province, working to ensure they are reflective of local cultural and social realities. Raised in the United States, Jim Watson has become a mentor to generations of language learners in Gaelic Nova Scotia, having come to know its culture to an extent few others have succeeded in doing.

3.3 Writing and Transcribing:

Why should we write about material from oral tradition in ways that make it inaccessible and uninteresting to those who shared it with us in the first place? Avoiding academic jargon whenever possible, my work attempts to complement the narrative quality of the local tradition conscious that "...social science is a form of storytelling, and the way we tell stories largely determines who will hear them" (Cruikshank 1990, 356). For that reason, and in order to allow the voices of participants to speak more clearly through my work, my thesis makes extensive use of transcriptions from recorded interviews. Not only does this acknowledge their ability to speak

for themselves, articulating cultural knowledge with minimal interpretation, I would argue it also enhances the general interest of my work as a whole.

Despite my reliance on transcriptions, I recognize that something is always lost when the spoken word is reduced to print: its timbre, tone and accent, the way certain words are drawn out and breaths are drawn in. But something may be gained too. The printed word faces less competition; no radio playing in the background, no dog barking in the yard. Reduced to their elemental form, words and their meaning come into focus through print; their confinement on the page providing time for reflection, giving them a weight not perceived in speech. While context is important, it can also be distracting. For the fieldworker, this includes a mind racing with questions or fatigued with work. When properly employed, transcriptions provide an opportunity for rediscovery.

In some ways, transcriptions are democratizing too. A frail voice, reduced to a whisper through age, sounds as strong as that of a teenager in print. But different people use words differently, and the process benefits some more than others. For a charismatic storyteller, whose delivery is charged with meaning and whose voice instills each word with significance, transcriptions leave much to be desired. Certain words and expressions are also used so frequently in speech that the ear has learned to ignore them, while the eye, denied such regular exposure, finds their presence in print obvious and intrusive. For these reasons, the way we transcribe speech is worth discussing.

As Ranald Thurgood points out, there is no uniform system for representing the spoken word in Folklore (1999, 22). Some scholars, including Dell Hymes, advocate an ethnopoetic approach, arranging speech as verse in order to replicate the timing and emphasis of the speaker (1981). Others, including Halpert and Widowson in *Folktales of Newfoundland* (1996), choose to

include nearly all details contained on the field recording in the final transcript. Indeed, the manner in which recordings are transcribed reveals a great deal about the goals of the scholar involved. For example, transcriptions that include every false start, hesitation, or repetition, represent wonderful data for linguists, but do little to convey the experience of hearing a story first hand.

In order to satisfy the primary goals of this study, which focus largely on narratives and the way people think about land, I have chosen an uncomplicated prose style of transcription. Like Richard Bauman, "I am more interested here in the narratives as oral literature than as dialectological data" (1986, x). While this decision would no doubt frustrate those interested in linguistic analysis, I agree with Sandy Ives when he suggests, "... the tape is the primary document and anyone requiring that level of accuracy would be a fool to trust someone else's transcription" (1974, 97).

Outside of minor concessions to reflect dialect, the orthography employed is standard. Though characteristic of normal, everyday speech, I have omitted ums, ahs, false starts and repetitious tag questions (i.e., you know, you see) when their presence detracts from the narrative involved. In other cases, a word removed from the text is noted by three dots (...), while four dots (....) demonstrate that a longer sequence of words has been removed. In most other ways, the transcriptions are straightforward.

3.4 Translation:

Because my study presents material in translation, another level of separation exists between the reader and the tradition bearer from whom it was collected. For those literate in Gaelic, transcriptions of the original text are included. Though standard orthographic conventions have recently been developed in Scotland, they have not been fully embraced in Nova Scotia. Partly as

a result, this study employs a traditional orthographic style that more closely reflects dialect variations maintained in the province. Given its historic marginalization, the prominent place accorded to Gaelic in this study is deliberate; its presence being symbolic of a growing recognition that Gaelic has long played a central role in the identity of tradition bearers in eastern Nova Scotia and Cape Breton Island.

3.5 Theoretical Approaches:

My work is premised on the belief that oral traditions can be understood on multiple levels. Charged with social significance and meaning, narratives are rarely mere statements of fact. Instead, they represent an internally directed dialogue between community members, reinforcing shared values and social norms. Similarly, oral history provides insight into areas conventional historic records often ignore; recollections about everyday lives, actions and emotions bring history to life and help people identify with the past. While meaning is individually, socially, and culturally constructed, oral traditions provide important insights into the people and communities that maintain them. My role in this process is not so much to determine meaning, but to reveal possibilities.

In order to do that, I have chosen to utilize a variety of theoretical interpretations with the understanding that, “theory is tremendously helpful when it generates new questions and is utterly constraining when it predetermines answers” (Cruikshank 1998, 165). This holistic approach is well grounded in Folklore. As Robert Baron points out, the interdisciplinary nature of the field anticipated many modern trends in scholarship: “Just prior to its mid-century point, folklore was, in spite of itself, kind of proto-postmodern in its peculiarly pluralistic, rather *laissez faire* eclecticism; in its hybrid accommodation of different perspectives; and in the absence of widely overarching theories” (1993, 242). Naturally enough, a historical framework forms a vital

part of my thesis since without it, according to Henry Glassie, “folklorists lack the means to explain what they see, and they are left to circle forever, refining and refining techniques of description” (1982, 11).

3.6 Defining Place:

In her work, anthropologist Margaret Rodman makes the point that, “anthropologists, who take pains to lead students through minefields of conceptualizing culture often assume that place is unproblematic” (1992, 640). Indeed, a surprising number of studies focused on place leave it an “unclarified notion” according to Edward Casey (1998, xii). In my thesis, place is considered a defined space, of variable size, to which people have ascribed meaning over time. Consequently, it stands in contrast to space, an abstract physical concept, which represents a boundless area devoid of personal attachments or identity. Indeed, the essential difference between the two comes down to human connections and their ability to transform “what would otherwise be a meaningless aspect of the scene into something that is meaningful (Goffman 1974, 21).

Though home to various ethnic and linguistic communities—and never politically autonomous—the geographic dimensions considered in this thesis corresponds to the historic distribution of Gaelic speaking communities in eastern Nova Scotia and Cape Breton Island, extending from Earltown, Colchester County, through the mainland counties of Antigonish and Guysborough County, and much of Cape Breton. This represents the area settlers and their descendants first came to know through Gaelic; in other words, the geographic expanse immigrants saw transformed from space to place within a linguistic and cultural framework informed by Gaelic.

Admittedly, this cohesive approach to linguistic and cultural identity in the region is somewhat artificial. Identities in this cultural community have always been highly localized,

usually informed by religious and ancestral origins. For that reason, an overall sense of belonging was never as strong or influential as smaller, localized ones in Nova Scotia. At the same time, the shared linguistic and cultural framework possessed by residents—shaped by a common history of dislocation and settlement—informs a similar understanding of land and provides a rationale for an inclusive approach.

Having provided an academic, historical and personal background for this study, we can now turn our attention to the research results. Starting with an outline that shows the critical role land played in the emigration process, the next chapter explores how residents describe their dislocation from Scotland and early encounters with the Mi'kmaq.

Chapter Four

Emigration and the Mi'kmaq

In many ways the relationship to place my work examines is rooted in events that took place generations ago and how tradition bearers depict them. Regardless of their historical accuracy, stories about emigration and settlement contain submerged truths about the individuals and groups who maintain them, exposing the roots of contemporary attitudes towards land, and the ways immigrants and their descendants have reconciled their presence in Nova Scotia. In other words, what people think happened in the past is worth studying: not only because it can reveal historical truths, but also because it can obscure them.

In order to understand this modern community in eastern Canada, we must first look back in time and across the Atlantic. Scottish Gaels rarely owned land before they settled in Nova Scotia. For hundreds of years, property was held in common by various clans in the Highlands and Islands. Hierarchical social units, clans were led by hereditary chiefs who assumed ownership of occupied lands on behalf of their followers. Traditional tenancies, worked for generations, were respected by oral agreement and customary practice, fostering a mutually supportive relationship between chiefs and clansmen in a largely pastoral society. Though social distinctions were observed, agricultural and martial service focused on collective growth. Indeed, clans measured their wealth by the size of the territory they occupied and the number of clansmen it supported. By the seventeenth century, this system of reciprocal obligations had begun to fail.

Finding their traditional role increasingly constrained by the state, many chiefs were seduced by the promise of power and wealth in the Anglo ascendancy. This occurred alongside a drive to suppress Gaelic, so that, according to the Education Act of 1616, “one of the chief and principal

causes of the continuance of barbarity and incivility among the inhabitants of the Islands and the Highlands, may be abolished and removed.”

Assimilated by their enemies and estranged from their clansmen, clan chiefs came to see land as a commercial resource to be exploited for material gain rather than social advancement. Stripped of the last of their independence after the Battle of Culloden in 1746, chiefs were encouraged to capitalize on their role as landlords to retain control of their estates. A clan-based society that featured communal landholding was quickly transformed by the spirit of capitalism.

For countless Scottish Gaels, the change was abrupt, severe and traumatic, reducing their country to “...a state of dejected aimlessness, stagnation, and discontent” (Campbell 1998, 115). Indeed, during his tour of the region in 1773, Samuel Johnson wagered that, “There was perhaps never any change of national manners so quick, so great and so general, as that which has operated in the Highlands by the last conquest and the subsequent laws.” He concludes by writing that residents retained “only their language and their poverty” (1837, 634).

While some lairds expressed a sense of loyalty to their tenants, others used their power and prestige for personal gain. In many cases, the manner in which the laird reacted to the new social and economic climate was related to his financial stability and personal regard for the tenantry. On the island of Barra, for instance, Colonel Roderick MacNeil remained a chief of the old order, regretting the departure of island residents but resigned to the role of emigration, “...the loss of so many very decent people, is to be much regretted: at the same time, those that remain, will in time, be much better...” (Quoted in Campbell 1990, 62). But when his son inherited control of the island and its growing debts, his relationship with the tenantry provoked a very different response:

Say to those who are about to emigrate that I sincerely wish them well through it, and assure those who have signed and repented that their repentance comes too late—So help

me God, they shall go, at all events off my property, man, woman and child. (Quoted in Campbell 1998, 145)

Without rights to the properties they had worked for generations, Scottish Gaels were vulnerable to economic exploitation and religious persecution, becoming pawns in an economic system that exploited their landlessness. When lairds and politicians required their labour in the kelp industry and military, government enacted legislation that ensured emigration was financially restrictive. When the need for that workforce declined, these constraints were relaxed in order to encourage people to leave. Indeed, as the textile industry gained importance and the price of wool soared, entire communities were forcibly evicted from traditional tenancies to make way for sheep, leaving the Highlands, according to one observer, “seething with discontent” (Quoted in Newton 2015, 35). Spread out over generations, the Highland Clearances had a devastating effect on the indigenous culture and language of Gaelic Scotland. John MacInnes reminds us that the chaos that accompanied this massive social restructuring was “intensified beyond endurance by the bewilderment of a people attacked by its own natural leaders” (2006, 385). Subjected to agricultural improvements that uprooted them and rent increases that impoverished them, many chose to emigrate. With the start of the American Revolution, their preferred destination became Nova Scotia.

Contrary to the popular image of these emigrants as tragic, forlorn wanderers, period evidence suggests many were “upbeat, highly motivated people, eager to take advantage not only of the great material potential of the New World but also of the freedom it offered” (Kennedy 2002, 19). The manner in which this movement took place likely helped. Unlike emigrants from most other places, including the Lowlands, Gaels usually relocated in family and community units. Emigration from the Scottish Highlands was thus a true community movement, with all

classes emigrating together, as Samuel Johnson observed in the Highlands:

...whole neighbourhoods formed parties for removal; so that the departure from their native country is no longer exile. He sits down in a better climate, surrounded by his kindred and friends; they carry with them their language, their opinions, their popular songs, and hereditary merriment; they change nothing but the place of their abode; and of that change they perceive no benefit. (1837, 646-647)

On the whole, stories that describe the process of emigration are rare in oral tradition today, with the settlement period representing the historical starting point for most contemporary tradition bearers in Gaelic Nova Scotia. In this respect, the oral narrative corpus appears to demonstrate a psychic break from the Old Country; a watershed moment in communal history reflected in the stories people tell.¹ David Craig, a Scottish writer who came to Cape Breton in search of accounts of eviction and displacement, was surprised by the scarcity of such material in circulation, reasoning “The memory of so genealogical and tradition-minded a people could not have lost the image of so momentous a turn in their history” (1997, 9). Eventually he was forced to conclude that the “most harrowing conditions are repressed so intensely that they barely reach the present day by word of mouth” (1997, 106). Coming to a similar conclusion, James Hunter, another Scottish writer, reasoned that, “...if that visitor does not readily come across much information as to how so many Highland Scots first got to be here, then that is understandable. Who wants horror stories to intrude on their vacation?” (1994, 123).

While contemporary tradition bearers may be familiar with some of the social and economic reasons their ancestors left Highland Scotland, accounts describing this period are often essentialized depictions, drawing on a combination of historical and modern sources. While

¹ A similar situation has been observed in other areas settled by Highland Scots in Canada: “Very few Quebec Scots can recount the history of the Highland Clearances, and those that are familiar with this period in Scottish history have gathered their information from books rather than proceeding generations” (Bennett-Knight in Doucette 1980, 45).

some note the role songs and stories played in preserving memories of mass migration, others observe how international travel, books and the Internet have made such information widely available. A number of tradition bearers also indicate that stories about Scotland were rare even in their youth. Mickey John H. MacNeil, from Jamesville, Victoria County, confided that, “*Cha robh iad a’ bruidhinn cus mu dheidhinn—bha dhà no trì naidheachdan aca mu dheidhinn na bha a’ dol nan aghaidh anns an t-seann dùthaich. Ach, cha bhiodh iad a’ bruidhinn cus mu dheidhinn*” (They weren’t speaking about it much—they had two or three stories about what was going on in the Old Country. But they wouldn’t be speaking about it much)(MacNeil 2008). Willie Fraser, who was raised in St. Rose, Inverness County, shared a similar perspective, noting, “*Agus an fheadhainn a bha mise eòlach air, cha robh fhios aca air mòran mu dheidhinn Scotland. Gus an d’fhuair iad a-mach—gus an start iad air dol air n-ais ‘s air n-adhart gu Scotland*” (And the ones I was familiar with, they didn’t know a lot about Scotland. Until they found out—until they started going back and forth to Scotland) (Fraser 2004).

As if to underscore these points, neither man used the Gaelic name for Scotland and Fraser referred to it only in English. Indeed, the cognitive distance that separates some tradition bearers from the Old County is significant. Willie Fraser, an exceptionally gifted tradition bearer who possessed a wide variety of oral traditions in Gaelic, claimed his ancestors settled in Nova Scotia in the mid-seventeenth century—a full hundred and fifty years earlier than seems likely. It was as if he were saying they had been in the area longer than was important to remember.

While some residents attribute mass migration to forced evictions and the importation of sheep, additional motivations are also suggested in oral tradition. Rita Gillis, who grew up in Grand Mira, Cape Breton County, told me that, “*Chaidh iad car a chur a-mach as a sin...dh’fheumadh iad falbh. Cha robh iad a’ dol a dh’ obair do dhuine eile* (They were kind of

put out from there...they had to leave. They weren't going to work for someone else) (Gillis 2004) while Souter Strachan, who was raised in Framboise, Richmond County, claimed, "*Och, cha robh obair gu leòr far a robh iad. Teaghlaichean mòr, teaghlaichean mòr 's cha robh obair ann dhaibh. 'S bha iad a' cluinntinn stòiridhean o na sailearan air na dùthaichean eile.*" (Och, there wasn't enough work where they were. Big families, big families and not enough work for them. And they were hearing stories from the sailors about different lands)(Strachan 2006).

While ascribing ultimate responsibility to the lairds, Hector MacIsaac, who was raised in St. Ninian, Inverness County, concluded that, "*Bha i duilich a bhith beò thall ann a' sin an uair ud. Agus nuair a fhuair iad cothrom, thàinig iad a-nall dhan dùthaich seo*" (It was difficult to be living over there at that time. And when they got an opportunity, they came over to this country)(MacIsaac 2006) and Murdock J. MacLennan, from North River, Victoria County, explained, "*Bha iad glè ghoirt, glè ghoirt an uair sin. 'S thàinig iad a-nall—bha dùil aca gum biodh e nas fhèarr ann a sheo na bha e's an t-Seann Dùthaich. Bha e nas fhèarr cuideachd*" (They were really hurting, really hurting then. And they came over—they expected it would be better here than it was there in the Old Country. And it was better too)(MacLennan 2006).

Significantly, the emigrants depicted in these and other accounts are not powerless, humiliated clansmen, but independent agents, making the best of a difficult situation, and choosing to come to Nova Scotia. In fact, as Michael Kennedy notes, Gaels in Scotland and the Maritimes "...have an unbroken tradition of describing their migration as a conscious, rational and positive choice to realize freedom" (Kennedy 1999: 293). Perhaps for that reason, Campbell and MacLean argue that, "... the Nova Scotia Scots have not enshrined bitterness in their legacy" (1974, 15).

Of course, a scarcity of detailed accounts does not equal an absence. Valuable narratives referencing motivations for emigration have also been retained in the region. Many of these reinforce depictions of immigrants as proud, forward thinking individuals, highlighting, for instance, the foresight they employed in choosing to leave Scotland. No doubt there is some truth to that. Although many emigrants were destitute upon their arrival in the province, those who came early were often people of financial means. In his observations about life in the Western Hebrides between 1780 and 1790, Rev. John Buchanan notes that many of those evicted from traditional tenancies were farmers who could afford to emigrate and “preferred to do so, rather than truckle down and have their children reduced to ‘Scallags’” (Servants) (MacDonald n.d., 7). The departure of the upper ranks accelerated social and economic collapse in the Highlands, which in turn compelled increasing numbers of less privileged residents to emigrate (Gibson 1998, 5-10). In the following, Johnnie Allan MacDonald, who was raised in Enon, Cape Breton County, provides an example of this independent spirit at work. The account concerns his great-grandfather, Angus MacDonald, better known as the Big Carpenter (*An Saor Mór*), and his decision to emigrate from North Uist.

It was in 1828, and the Big Carpenter called a meeting of all his friends and relations, that it was just as well they’d prepare to be leaving, they’d be driving them out anyway. And in about a year he’d try and have his favorite vessel for to take them over across to Canada. So he told them whatever they could get along without, to sell it now, whatever they’d get for it, because the time of leaving wasn’t the time to sell things at all, and they could get along with very little, you know, for a year. When the time was come he had a vessel called the *Commerce* engaged for to take them across, and it took them six weeks and six days to come to Sydney. (Craig 1997, 98)

As this account illustrates, the communal and pragmatic nature of emigration is stressed in oral tradition. Annie MacKinnon, who was raised in Lismore, provides another example. When we spoke several years ago, she recalled the story of two early settlers who left their home

in the Highlands because of a shortage of available property and work. Although they travelled to London, the men had trouble finding employment because of their lack of English.

Fortunately, they met another Highlander, who helped them secure work on the docks.

Eventually, they joined the Navy and fought at the Siege of Louisbourg and Battle of Quebec. In return for their service, the pair received grants of land in Nova Scotia, where their descendants reside today (MacKinnon 2005).

In depicting their ancestors as economic migrants, forced to leave their homes for work, MacKinnon and other tradition bearers make subtle allusions to contemporary economic realities in the region that include high unemployment and out-migration. In this way, empathetic links are forged between the past and present; the historical characters recalled in their stories are subject to the same forces that drive friends and relations to work and live in Alberta or Toronto. At the same time, a spirit of independence in these narratives also helps neutralize feelings of powerlessness engendered by displacement.

While emigration may have been pragmatic, narratives about this period reveal a need to escape social and economic subjugation as well. The shame of dispossession is thus transformed into a narrative of self-determination and triumph (Newton 2015, 145). In the following tale, Fr. John Angus Rankin, who spent much of his life as the parish priest in Glendale, Inverness County, makes this point clear.

My great-great-grandfather rowed from Prince Edward Island to Cape Breton Island. Rowed across the strait there from P.E. I. to Mabou coal-mines. And they slept under the boat, turned the dory over and slept under it. And when they awoke in the morning, there was a little rivulet on the beach, and they started a fire, just underneath the high tall trees, so she looked up at them and she said, 'Finlay, we're free. This is our country.' Went to the river and somehow or other—it was teeming with fish—caught some fish. They had fried fish for breakfast and whatever else they had in the boat. They were free. (Craig 1997, 108)

In order to achieve the liberation they so desired, the couple in this narrative is forced to emigrate twice, once to Prince Edward Island and then to Cape Breton. Despite its contrived dialogue, the story is based on a very real sense of relief described by period settlers. Donald Campbell, an immigrant who settled in Big Bras d'Or, Victoria County, provides contemporary evidence in a letter from 1830:

Thank God I am well pleased for coming to this country as I find myself quite easy, having occupied land to call my own free from all burdens whatsoever. I go out and in at my pleasure, no soul living forces me to do a turn against my will, no laird, no Factor, having no rent, nor any toilsome work but what I do myself. (Campbell to relative, October 7, 1830)

The sense of gratitude evident in this historic document is also recalled in oral tradition. Fr. Allan MacMillan, whose forebears settled in Boisdale, Cape Breton County, attributes this feeling to the personal autonomy afforded by private land ownership in Nova Scotia:

I remember the story of old MacKinnon when he landed in Beaver Cove. And he jumped out of the boat as it came to the shore, you know, and he went down on one knee, took his cap off and thanked God, and he said "I'll never have to take off my cap to a landlord again." He was going to have his own land. And that was very, very strong in the people. (MacMillan 2015)

Given this reality, we should hardly be surprised that a desire to salvage an injured pride is also evident in some narratives. In the following example, related by Dan Angus Beaton, a former resident of Blackstone, Inverness County, this motivation is made explicit. According to family tradition, Big Finlay Beaton, an enormous, hulking man, became frustrated with the exaggerated rent demanded by his landlord in Lochaber. He secretly made preparations to emigrate with his family, summoning the landlord to collect all that was due to him on a certain day. Upon his arrival, the landlord found the amount provided deficient. He quickly doused the fire, signaling his intention to evict the family, and turned to leave. Big Finlay called him back,

telling him he had something more to give him. Handing over the balance, Beaton seized the landlord by the neck, forcing him to lick his boots before knocking him unconscious (Rankin 2004, 56). As he fled his ancestral home, Big Finlay unhitched the landlord's horse, giving it a slap that sent it running into the hills and delaying any possible pursuit. In conversation with Jim Watson, Dan Angus Beaton concluded the tale by adding:

Thànaig 'ad anall air an t-Sally. Bha e smart gu leor. Bha e 'na dhuin' ionnsaichte, làn sgoil. Thànaig esan anall `s cha deachaidh e fhaighinn riamh. Ge b'e dh'èirich dha 'n tighearna, cha n- eil fhios agamas. Ach cha bu toil leam a' slaic a fhuair e mu 'n pheirceall bho `n fhear ud. Shin agad naidheachd Fhionnlaigh Mhoir a' fàgail na dùthchadh.

They crossed over on the Sally. He was plenty smart. He was an educated man. He came over and was never caught. Whatever happened to the landlord, I have no idea. But I wouldn't want to get the blow he got on the jaw from that fellow. That's the story of Big Finley leaving the country. (Watson 2016)

Catholics like Big Finlay had an additional incentive to leave Highland Scotland. They were already subject to the repressive restrictions of the Penal Laws, which denied them rights and privileges accorded to Protestants. Now, many were concerned their landlords, who had often converted in order to keep their lands, would force them to renounce their faith. Such a scenario was not entirely unrealistic. In the early eighteenth century, the laird of Rum used physical force to instigate the religious conversion of his tenantry, thrashing one man with a yellow cane in order to set an example for the rest. Subsequently ascribed to other lairds and locations, the incident is recalled in a facetious name for Protestantism still known to some tradition bearers in Nova Scotia: *Creideamh a' Bhata Bhuidhe* (Religion of the Yellow Stick).

A similarly oppressive proselytizing technique was later attempted in South Uist. Colin MacDonald, the laird of Boisdale, was known to physically and verbally abuse tenants, threatening eviction for those not willing to convert (Toomey 1991, 55). Though largely unsuccessful, his desire to convert island residents was partly responsible for the first major

exodus of Scottish Gaels to the Maritimes, with tenants taking up lands purchased on Prince Edward Island by John MacDonald, the laird of Glenaladale.

Due to this religious climate, emigrants have sometimes been portrayed as a chosen people in Nova Scotia. In the following excerpts from a sermon delivered in Christmas Island in 1915, Rev. Donald MacAdam makes this point explicit, arguing: “*An measg sluagh na h-Alba gu leir thagh Dia a mach Dha-Fhein beagan mhilltean anns na Garbh-chrìochan agus anns na h-eileannan an n-Iar. Sinne a sliochd.* (From amongst the entire population of Scotland God chose for Himself a few thousand in the Western Highlands and Isles. We are their descendants) (1915, 21). Not surprisingly, this distinction gave special significance to emigrants who had escaped religious persecution in Nova Scotia, according to MacAdam.

Though emigration to Nova Scotia included both Protestants and Catholics, the added pressure of religious persecution also gave Catholics a demographic strength they lacked in Scotland. It also gave ill-fated emigrants the gloss of martyrdom. Daniel M. R. MacNeil, who was raised in Benacadie Pond, Cape Breton County, claimed settlers came to the region to escape religious unrest in Barra. He learned the following story from his father:

Thàinig iad a’ seo bhon nach b’urraibh an creideamh a’ leantail. Nuair a bhiodh iad a’ dol dhan eaglais bhiodh fear na sheasamh air rathad ann a’ sin. Na tigeadh tu dhan taobh ud, dhan eaglais Chaitligeach, cha bhiodh obair agad a-màireach. Dh’fheumadh iad a’ dhol dhan eaglais Phròstanach. Agus cha robh seo a’ còrdadh riutha. ‘S thuirt e, thuig e-fhéin an aon dòigh a bh’aca, ‘s e an dùthaich fhagail.
(MacNeil 2003)

They came here because they couldn’t follow their religion. When they’d be going to church, there was a man standing in the road there. If you would go to this side, to the Catholic church, you wouldn’t have work tomorrow. They had to go to the Protestant church. But that didn’t agree with them. And he said, he himself realized, the only option they had was to leave the country.

Remarkably, the account bears a striking resemblance to another story—also ascribed to Barra—which was recorded in print in 1864. It describes the lengths to which the island laird supposedly went in order to convert his tenants to Protestantism.

Meanwhile the islanders remained unconverted, and having been turned out of the old parish church by law, had built themselves a sufficient chapel... The story goes on to say, that on his return he stationed on a Sunday morning at the bifurcation of the two roads which led to church and chapel, and proceeded with his yellow rattan to knock down any of the people who presumed to go to the latter and so the Island. (Forbes 1864, 189)

While both stories conform to a cycle of migratory legends rooted in the story of forced conversions in Rum—Callum Beck has traced more than a dozen examples in Scotland and Prince Edward Island (Beck n.d.)—claims of religious strife on Barra are also supported by the historical record. As early as 1794 Rev. Edward MacQueen noted that islanders were leaving due to “...promises of the undisturbed profession of their religion (being all Roman Catholics) and of free property for themselves and their offspring for ever” (Quoted in Campbell 1998, 59). As economic conditions deteriorated, Roderick MacNeil, the laird of Barra, complained bitterly about the loss of labour he suffered due to Holy Days and threatened to bring in Protestant tenants if the situation was not improved.

By this time island residents were already familiar with Cape Breton. According to oral and written accounts, soldiers came to know the area after participating in the Siege of Louisbourg in 1758. Touring the Bras d’Or Lakes, the battle-weary men were able to explore and evaluate the nearby land and waterways. According to Daniel M. R. MacNeil, upon their return to Barra, the soldiers built boats and sailed back to Cape Breton: “*Agus nuair thill iad dhachaidh gu Albainn an ath bhliadhna start iad a’ togail bàta. Thog iad sgoth mòr agus bàta seòladh mòr agus thàinig iad a-nall an ath-bhliadhna. Thàinig iad gu Pòn na Maiseadh, far a robh iad.*” (And when they returned home to Scotland the next year they started to build a boat. They built

a large scow and a large sailboat and they came across the next year. They came to Benacadie Pond, where they had been)(MacNeil 2001). Not surprisingly, the journey was fraught with danger:

When they were approaching Nova Scotia there was a storm came and one of the boats sank. There was one boat at the back. The boat that my people were in was in the front. It was a better, safer boat and they would stick it in front. And one of the boats...my great-grandfather's brother said to him, he said,

“John is sinking!”

“You better be careful,” he said, “or you’ll be sinking yourself!” he said.

“Mind your own business and we’ll be able to weather, but you’ve got to keep your head!” he said.

And he said they lost one of the (boats). And he said they say there was a lot of the people that left Scotland that came over here that never made it. A lot of them never made it. (MacNeil 2003)

Although this story does not accord with the timeframe in which settlement occurred—nearly fifty years elapsed between the Siege of Louisbourg and settlement in central Cape Breton—it demonstrates how oral traditions can be chronologically condensed over time, retaining only the most salient elements. Though accounts of immigrants sailing their own boats from Scotland are absent from the written record, larger ships frequently deposited immigrants in ports such as Pictou, from which they built small vessels to sail to Cape Breton. Could this account recall one such voyage? Regardless of the answer, the story clearly resonated with MacNeil. In our conversations together, it surfaced many times.

Suggestive of the independence, bravery, and skill his ancestors possessed, the account draws attention to the physical and psychological loss families endured as a result of emigration. The advice it contains seems as applicable to those buffeted by personal, social and cultural loss as sailors riding out a storm on the North Atlantic: one cannot look back at what is lost but must forge ahead in order to survive. In many ways, this perspective is a marked departure from the popular image of immigrants—broken clansmen, homesick and dreaming of Scotland. Indeed,

as Colin Calloway notes, “The mythology that all Highlanders were driven from their homelands to make way for sheep and took to their new homes with deep longing for their old appears to be more prominent in narratives written in English than in memories preserved in Gaelic” (Calloway 2008, 265).

At the same time, the story also draws attention to the dangers inherent in such passages. In our conversations, Souter Strachan made these hazards clear: *'S iomadh bàta nach d'rainig tìr, a chaidh fodha dìreach air na creagan, nach d'fhuair iad riamh air tìr... 'S iomadh bàta a thàinig faisg air tìr, nach d'rainig tìr.* (Many is the boat that never arrived on shore, that went down just on the rocks, that they never made it to land. Many is the boat that came close to land, that never arrived ashore)(Strachan 2006). Margaret MacLean, who was raised in Mabou Coal Mines, Inverness County, claimed one group was particularly vulnerable: *Agus pàistean, bha iad air bàtaichean, dh'eug iad leis cho duilich 's a bha an gnothach. 'Gan cur air seann bhàtaichean, nach biodh làidir 'son sin a sheasamh.* (And babies, they were on boats, they died with how tough the experience was. Being put on old boats without the strength to stand it) (MacLean 2007).

Despite the resilient tone struck by many narratives, emigration was undoubtedly a frightening and emotional experience for settlers. Not only was the crossing perilous, emigrants knew their separation from friends and relations would likely be permanent. Traces of this anxiety are also preserved in oral tradition. Sadie Poirier, who lived in Rear Judique, Inverness County, once told me about a girl who was planting potatoes in Scotland. Scheduled to leave on an emigrant ship, she broke down and cried when she realized she would be gone forever by the time the crop was harvested.

Written accounts of the journey made by emigrants have occasionally been preserved in local and family histories. While some crossings were smooth, others were fraught with danger and discomfort. The first wave of Highland settlers to land in the province were at sea for eleven weeks in a ship that was slow, wet and rotting. Delayed by a powerful storm off Newfoundland, eighteen children died and food and water grew scarce (Campbell and MacLean 1974, 37). Overcrowding, poor provisions, disease and death were not uncommon on board such ships. But personalities could also clash in the cramped quarters below deck. In his memoirs, Archibald MacKenzie, who immigrated to Pictou County, recalled religious divisions and disputes on board the ship he boarded in Mull (N.d.). In a column on the history of Antigonish County, Rev. Ronald MacGillivray relates a story about a ruthless captain who only softened after a show of force by passengers (1943, 9). Another account, maintained in a family history, preserves the story of an emigrant ship that had to avoid an English man-of-war searching for recruits for the Navy by raising the distress flag and feigning sickness aboard (Harding 1974). Despite the rigors of travel, one family had to emigrate twice. Encountering fierce storms, their ship began to leak and was forced to return to port after three months at sea. Not surprisingly, many passengers gave up at this point and returned home. Donald MacDonald and his family persisted. They boarded another vessel and set sail once again, eventually settling at Round Island, Cape Breton County ('The MacDonald Family' n.d.).

Historians have made good use of accounts like these to bring to life the chaos and suffering immigrants endured on the Atlantic. But too often an emphasis on historical accuracy has devalued other stories from oral tradition that are capable of providing insight into the meaning settlers and their descendants ascribed to migration. Oral historian Alessandro Portelli argues that "...memory is not a passive depository of facts, but an active process of creation of

meanings. Thus, the specific utility of oral sources lies, not so much in their ability to preserve the past, as in the very changes wrought by memory. These changes reveal the narrators' effort to make sense of the past and to give a form to their lives..." (Portelli 1991, 52).

A wonderful example is provided by Christina MacDonald, who lived in Pleasant Valley, Antigonish County, an area settled by Catholics. Speaking with author Teresa MacIsaac, MacDonald shared the following story about her ancestors learned from family tradition:

The length of the crossing was increased by a vicious storm which blew the ship off course. The boat ran out of food, and the passengers were faced with starvation. The passengers included a number of mothers with babies. The male passengers had a meeting and decided that rather than let the entire contingent die, it would be better to sacrifice the life of one baby. The women reluctantly went along with this decision. Each woman with a baby was given a stick, and it was agreed that the woman who drew the shortest stick would sacrifice her baby. The poor dear mother who lost the contest gave up her baby with great reluctance, and its life was terminated. The passengers then drank the blood of the child. The sacrifice of the baby enabled the passengers to sustain themselves, but they never forgot the terrible lengths to which they were driven to keep themselves alive. (MacIsaac 2006, 26)

Not surprisingly, historic print sources record nothing comparable. Nor does the suggestion that child sacrifice and cannibalism occurred on board a nineteenth century emigrant ship seem plausible. But as Julie Cruikshank reminds us, "Oral testimonies are very different from archival documents and are never easily accessible to outsiders. They are cultural documents in which much is implicit, in which metaphor and symbol play a role in how ideas are presented" (1990, 3).

So what should we make of this story? Given the women's reluctance to participate, it may suggest the subordinate role they were expected to play in the emigration process. Indeed, immigration often benefited men more directly than women, since men generally owned the land and were able to see the fruits of their labour develop, whereas women remained more confined to home, completing the same domestic chores they were charged with in Scotland.

But the religious overtones embedded in this account are also essential to recognize. Like the emigrants in the story, Christians were saved by a blood sacrifice. With his death on the cross, Jesus gave them new life. Catholics also consume the body and blood of their savior through the Holy sacrifice of the Mass. Given the role religious persecution played in pushing emigrants out of Scotland—and how some clergy characterized the economic and social turmoil they fled as retribution for sin—such an interpretation takes on special significance in a Catholic stronghold like Antigonish County. Whether conscious or unconscious, this narrative appears to contain a message to descendants about the sacrifice of emigration and communal rebirth in Nova Scotia. In many ways, it can be interpreted as a kind of creation myth.

The importance of such stories is best understood when we remember that Scottish Gaels settled in a land that was already claimed and occupied; arriving as instruments of the same colonial power and economic system that made their migration necessary in the first place. Indeed, as Colin Calloway points out, “Indigenous peoples from America to Australia have encountered Scots as instruments, not victims of British colonization” (2008, 12).

In the few written accounts we have from the period, immigrants are not inclined to express an awareness of this dual identity. Yet in the oral tradition we find evidence of the ways settlers and their descendants have come to terms with it. Having explored Scottish Gaelic narratives describing early encounters with Mi’kmaq, Michael Newton concludes that they reveal a desire to “explain their settlement of territories previously inhabited by First Nations in such a way as to minimize cognitive dissonance over the deprivation of Indigenous Americans” (2013, 243).

This material also demonstrates how narratives are molded to reflect the needs and aspirations of the people who tell them. Though historical sources hold that many Highland

immigrants arrived in the province materially destitute—often suffering sickness and requiring government assistance to survive—tradition bearers rarely describe their ancestors in this way, choosing instead to highlight their strength, pride and fortitude.

Speaking from his boat tied to the wharf in Bay St. Lawrence, ‘Wild’ Allan Bonnar told me the Highlanders who chose to come to Nova Scotia were the fighters, the ones who would not be subdued in Scotland (Bonnar 2016). Something of a strongman himself, Bonnar naturally identifies with this image of his ancestors and is able to point to the work they accomplished to validate his claims. In the following, Margaret MacLean provides an example of the adaptability of the narrative tradition, showing how stories can be used to solidify an image of the past that is acceptable to the present:

Uell, aon turas, anns an t-Seann Dùthaich—Scotland—bha na Gàidheil agus na Sassanaich airson àite a bha seo fhaighinn greim air. Ghlèidheadh iad dhaibh-p-fhèin e. Agus bha iad a’ roweachadh mu dheidhinn. Agus tha seansa gu robh aca ri tighinn thairis air uisge—ann am bàtaichean. Agus ge bith có a’ chiad duine a’ ruigeadh an tìr, gheobheadh a’ fear sin an t-àite. Agus bha fear dhe na Gàidheil, bha e cho beòthail air a’ gnothach fhaighinn, am pìos do thalamh, gheàrr e a’ làimh dheth aig a dhuirn e, agus thilg e sin a-null dh’ionnsaidh an t-adhbhar, am pìos àite a bha iad a roweachadh mu dhèidhinn. Agus fhuair esan an t-àite. ‘S ann le a làmh. Agus bha iad riamh—bhiodh iad a’ bruidhinn air làmh dhearg nan Dòmhnallaich. ‘Se Dòmhnallach a’ fhuair an t-àite. Cha d’ fhuair Sassanach idir e. (MacLean 2007)

Well, one time, in the old-country—Scotland—the Gaels and the English were wanting to get a hold of this area here. They would keep it for themselves. And they were fighting about it. And it seems they had to go across water. In boats. And whoever was the first to reach land, that man would get the place. And one of the Gaels, he was so excited to get the thing, the piece of land, he cut off his hand at the wrist, and he threw it over towards the ground, the piece of the land they were rowing about. And he got the place. It was his hand. And they were always—they would be speaking about the Red Hand of the MacDonalds. It was a MacDonald who got the place. An Englishman didn’t get it at all.

While this story was once grounded in the local tradition—MacLean claimed nearly everyone knew it during her youth—folklorists will recognize its links to the mythical tale of the Red Hand of Ulster, an ancient and prominent symbol in Northern Ireland, which provides an

account of the foundation of Ulster. Both stories share the same plot and premise diverging only in the characters and land involved (Lundy 2006, 2-3). Given what we know about the flexibility of the oral tradition, we should hardly be surprised. Testifying to their shared cultural origins, variants of the tale abound in both Ireland and Scotland (eg. Lee 1920, 22-23; Thomas 2014, 126). However, it seems significant that this version, unlike many others, avoids pitting one clan against another. While the hero is a MacDonald, the Gaels appear united against the English. The plot is an essentialized depiction of two ancient enemies struggling to claim the same piece of land—and in the version told by MacLean, the English are defeated. In reality, such triumphs were rare. But in the stories we tell, we create another reality. Now consider the following tale, told by Jeff MacDonald, a resident of Kingsville, Inverness County, who combines the best qualities of a native tradition bearer with training in Folkloristics:

Seo naidheachd a chuala mi aig brathair m'athair, Francis Dougal Shandaidh Iain Phàdraig. 'S ann às a' Rids a bha Francis. Agus dar a bha e beag, bha boireannach a' fuireach teann orra. 'S e Seas Mhór an t-aimn a bh'oirre. Nic-a' Mhaighstir a bh'innte. Agus bha esan ag ràdhainn gu robh dealbh aice air a' bhalla. Agus gu robh an Dòmhnallach a bha seo. Agus 's e Dòmhnall na làimh dhearg a bhiodh esan ag ràdhinn. Sin Dòmhnall na làimhe dearga. Agus gun d'thàinig esan às an t-seann dùthaich leis na ciad Ghàidheil dhan dùthaich seo. Agus gu robh iad a' tighinn gu tìr shuas ann an Siorramach Phiogtó agus gum faca na h-Innseanich iad agus dh'fhalbh iad sìos dhan chladach. Agus cha robh iad a' dol a leigeil leotha a' tighinn air tìr air sàilleabh nach do rugadh gin dhiubh 's an dùthaich ùir agus nach do dhòirteadh an fhuil aca, ann an dòigh sam bith, riamh air an talamh a' sin. Agus bha iad a' dol a shabaid riutha. Agus bha esan ag ràdhinn gu robh lighich, no dotair air choireiginn, air bòrd an t-soithich agus gun do dh'fhaighnich Dòmhnall Dòmhnallach a bha seo gun gearradh e a làmh dheth. Agus rinn e sin. Agus gu robh an fhuil anns a' làimh, agus gun do thilg iad a' làmh air a' chladach agus gun do ruith an fhuil às a sin. Agus dar a chunnaic na h-Innseanich sin, leig iad leis na Gàidheil tighinn gu tìr. (MacDonald 2015)

Here's a story I heard from my father's brother, Francis Dougall Sandy John Patrick. Francis was from the Ridge. And when he was little, there was an old woman who lived near to them. They called her Big Jess. She was a MacMaster. And he was saying she had a picture on the wall. And that it was this MacDonald. It was Donald of the Red Hand he was calling him and that he came over from the Old Country with the first Gaels in this country. And that they were landing up in Pictou County and the Natives saw them and they left to go down to the shore. And they weren't going to let them come on shore

because none of them had been born in the new land and they hadn't ever spilt their blood, in any way, on that land. And they were going to fight them. And he was saying that there was a healer, or doctor of some sort, on board the vessel, and that this Donald MacDonald asked him to cut off his hand. And that's what he did. And the blood was in the hand, and that they threw the hand on the shore and the blood ran out from that. And when the Natives saw that, they let the Gaels come ashore.

This is obviously a variant of the same story. Its hero remains the same and its most memorable elements endure; in a contest over land, a hand is offered as a sacrifice. But like the community that tells it, the story has adapted to a new physical and social environment. It speaks of Pictou County, instead of Northern Ireland or the Scottish Hebrides. Instead of two parties racing towards the same piece of unclaimed land, one arrives in the territory of the other. Instead of a struggle between two groups, one makes an offering to the other. Nor are we given to believe these two groups are equally matched. The scale is clearly weighted in favor of the Mi'kmaq. After weeks at sea, the settlers are not even able to disembark.

Changes like these are important to recognize in the oral tradition. Evolving to reflect a new reality, adaptations are charged with meaning. By the time the Gaels arrived in Nova Scotia, Europeans had called it home for generations. Yet in this account they never make an appearance. Instead, indigenous residents arrive on the scene. In this way their authority over the land is implicitly acknowledged. This is a significant departure from historical descriptions of colonization in North America, which often portrayed vast areas as empty and unclaimed. The story also suggests the Mi'kmaq posed a substantial threat to the settlement of Gaels. In reality, deprived of their former hunting grounds and exposed to disease, the small population of Mi'kmaq who remained was often dependent on government support to survive (Paul 1993, 186). Scottish Gaels, settling in a British colony, would have also been assured of the support

and protection of the colonial government. Thus the story distorts some historical realities. But history is made up of more than facts.

Like its counterparts in Northern Ireland and Scotland, this story focuses on the right to land. Prior to their arrival in the province, Scottish Gaels were exposed to frightening tales about the indigenous inhabitants of North America depicting the people they would meet as brutal and savage warriors (Newton 2011, 70). While the reality was often quite different, Mi'kmaq could still threaten the moral right immigrants had to settle in Nova Scotia. The anxiety this vulnerability provoked is revealed and resolved in narrative form. Although they claimed no hereditary right to the land, once again a sacrifice was enough to make the Gaels accepted in Nova Scotia. This sacrifice appears symbolic of a sustained presence and dedication to the land, since these were qualities formally possessed only by the Mi'kmaq. In this way the story has evolved to reflect its new surroundings, while retaining its central message and theme.

Other accounts depict similarly peaceful resolutions to settlement. Consider, for instance, the story of the first settlers in Iona, as recalled by Murdock MacNeil, who lived in Rear Christmas Island. Having begun clearing land along the shore, the Highlanders were surrounded by a group of Mi'kmaq. Though neither party could understand the other, the settlers soon perceived they were unwelcome intruders. Fearing for their lives, they dropped to their knees and made the sign of the cross. When the Mi'kmaq saw this, they recognized the settlers as Catholics. Having been converted by the French, the Mi'kmaq welcomed the strangers. The two parties then shared a meal together, with the Mi'kmaq contributing eels and the Highlanders providing salt.

This is arguably the best-known story about an initial encounter between Scottish Gaels and the Mi'kmaq. Having appeared in print in various forms over the last century, it was

reenacted by costumed descendants of both parties involved to commemorate the two hundredth anniversary of the occasion. Several years ago, I even collected a version of the story told in Barra, the Scottish island from which the settlers emigrated. In certain ways, the story has taken on mythic qualities in central Cape Breton, explaining the presence of Scottish Gaels in Mi'kmaq territory and portraying colonization in conciliatory terms.

Like the previous example, this narrative emphasizes the vulnerability of the Gaels. They are alone, afraid and susceptible to attack. When confronted by the Mi'kmaq, they do not make ready to fight but prepare to die. Because religious persecution drove them to Cape Breton, this casts the settlers as martyrs. It also underscores the distorted image they possessed of the Mi'kmaq. The immigrants expected vengeful warriors, but found generous and welcoming hosts. United by the same faith, they sit down as friends. The contributions each party makes to the communal feast takes on symbolic overtones. In adding salt to the eels, the Gaels improve what the Mi'kmaq provide. Rightly or wrongly, the account leaves us with the impression both groups have benefited from the presence of the other.

Is such an interpretation simply the product of modern folklorists? Have tradition bearers also ascribed symbolic significance to this story? A document prepared by Hector MacNeil more than a century ago provides remarkable insight into such questions. A descendant of one of the men confronted by the Mi'kmaq, MacNeil argues the story of the meeting between the Gaels and the Mi'kmaq contains miraculous overtones, which he outlined in the following interpretation presented to the parish priest:

- i) The four MacNeils had known many times before what it meant to sacrifice for the Faith. ii) They had witnessed many times before how timely Providence can come with Its heavenly aid. iii) They had seen with their own eyes how it was the Sign of the Cross that completely changed the heart of the Chief. iv) They were convinced that it was the Crucified Christ Himself who had summoned both Micmac and Gael as brothers of His own. v) They recognized in the speared eels the symbol of sacrifice. vi) The salt recalled

to the minds the Salt of Wisdom used in the rite of Baptism for the preservation of the Faith. vii) And how could anyone say that they were being deceived in their inner-most thoughts when—without their even knowing it—the very ground on which they were then standing was later to be consecrated to the offering of Christ’s Sacrifice of the Cross? For there, where all this happened in 1800, there stands today the parish church of Iona, dedicated to the patronage of St. Columba of Iona in Scotland. (MacNeil 2004, n.p.)

As this document suggests, residents have a long history of seeing a deeper meaning in this story. Containing symbolic overtones charged with meaning, the narrative is capable of being interpreted on multiple levels, containing a flexible meaning that allows it to evolve according to changing social and historical realities. During a period of intense church influence, for instance, religious connotations were ascribed to the story. As church attendance wanes and residents are increasingly sensitized to the need for reconciliation with their indigenous neighbours, its meaning has evolved to promote a conciliatory view of colonization as the coming together of friends.

This is not to suggest settlement occurred without the cooperation and friendship of the Mi’kmaq. In fact, Grand Chief Gabriel Sylliboy related a very similar account of the arrival of the Gaels to John Lorne Campbell in 1937, focusing on a ritualistic exchange between the two groups. According to him, the Mi’kmaq were given the Gaelic language, and the Gaels were given fire. (Newton 2011, 83). Many other stories describe how indigenous people guided settlers to good land. In his history of Inverness County, John L. MacDougall relates the story of James Ross, who set out from Little Narrows with a First Nations guide in 1800. Eager to explore more northern parts of Cape Breton, Ross was eventually taken to North East Margaree, where his guide recommended settlement. Impressed by the area, Ross and his brothers all moved there (MacDougall 1922, 424).

Mary Campbell, who lives in Glenora Falls, Inverness County, recalled a similar story from family tradition. During the early days of settlement, Mi'kmaq directed her ancestor, John Campbell (*Iain mac Dhòmhnuill Mhóir*), to grazing lands on Cape Mabou, even helping blaze a trail to the area. Tradition bearers in Richmond County still remember the name given to one such guide. *Iain Dubh an t-Innseanach* (Black Jim the Indian) piloted early settlers through the region by birch bark canoe. According to Michael B. MacKenzie, "He told them where the trout and salmon were plentiful. He led them around Loch Lomond Lakes first, then returned to a meadow-like land, where a small river gurgled through the hills." Based on this advice, Philip and Sandy Chisholm both settled in the area. (MacKenzie 1984, 181)

Grounded in stories like these, contemporary tradition bearers are quick to point out the debt their progenitors owed to the Mi'kmaq. Speaking with Jim Watson, Donald MacEachern emphasized the peaceful relationship pioneers enjoyed with the Mi'kmaq and the assistance they received from them: "*Bha 'ad ag ràdh gu robh na h-Innseanaich glé thoilichte 's gu robh 'ad math airson cuideachadh cuideachd 'gan cuideachadh air dòigh an cumail beò co dhiubh an àm a' gheamhraidh*" (They were saying that the Natives were very happy and that they were good to help too, to help them in how to keep alive in the winter anyway) (Watson 2002, 273).

Peter Jack MacLean, who lived in Rear Christmas Island claimed that "*'S e na h-Innseanaich a chuidich iad. Thug iad dhaibh cuideachadh. Bha iad math dhaibh*" (It was the Natives who helped them. They gave them assistance. They were good to them) (MacLean 2004) while Martha Ramey, who was raised in Rear Big Pond, Cape Breton County, related that "*Thug na h-Innseanaich cuideachadh dhaibh. Mur b'e sin, cha bhiodh iad beò tha mi cinnteach. 'S e sin a chuala mi*" (The Natives gave them assistance. If it weren't for that, they wouldn't be alive, I'm sure. That's what I heard)(Ramey 2014). To be clear, such recognition is not simply a

product of modern cultural sensitivity. Only a generation after large-scale immigration came to an end, Rev. George Patterson also made clear the support settlers received from the Mi'kmaq:

From them they learned to make and use snow-shoes, to call moose, and other arts of forest life. From them they often received supplies of provisions. One old man used to say that the sweetest meal he ever ate was provided and prepared by them....from the time of the arrival of the Hector, they never gave the settlers any serious molestation, and generally showed them real kindness, which, when the tables were turned, so that the whites had plenty and they were needy, has not always been reciprocated. (Patteron 1877, 92)

Significantly, contemporary tradition bearers also indicate that support received from the Mi'kmaq was not properly reciprocated by Scottish Gaels. In the following, Carlie MacNeil, a resident of Iona, Victoria County, provides a local perspective:

But I remember it was Catha Jankowski that told me one time; always treat the Natives with respect, she said. Because when everybody came around here, the Natives showed everybody how to survive the cold winters, to make it through the winter and feed yourself. And after that, she said, the people didn't treat the Natives very well. She said, now the Natives were way worse off, after them treating everybody else so well, they were down to eating, well Catherine said, they were down to eating rats. They'd be that bad off. Cause they had nothing because everybody took from them and didn't return. And always respect the Natives. Because they're the backbone that helped the Scottish people. Never think the Scottish people are, Catha said. Always be proud of the Natives. (MacNeil 2015)

This appraisal is corroborated by the historical record. The disappearance of game animals—driven further and further into the remote interior as forests were cleared—was frequently noted during the settlement period. The impact this had on the Mi'kmaq First Nation was outlined by Richard Brown in 1869: “The rapid extension of cleared lands has driven most of the game into the interior, where the Indians occasionally make hunting excursions, but none of them now look to that source as a means of subsistence” (1869, 459). Observing how this affected the traditional lifestyle of the Mi'kmaq, Abraham Gesner wrote:

From the clearing and occupation of the forests, the wild domain of the Moose and Caribou has been narrowed. Being hunted by the dogs of the back settlers, these animals

have become scarce—thus the Indian has been deprived of his principal subsistence as well as the warm furs that in olden times lined his wigwam. Indigenous roots once highly prized for food have been destroyed by domestic animals. Herds of swine have consumed the shellfish upon the shores. To these may be added the actual driving back of the Indian into the interior woods... These united causes have operated fearfully, and have reduced the whole tribe to the extreme of misery and wretchedness. . . (Gesner 1995, 59)

Although their distress was especially severe, the Mi'kmaq were not the only people who suffered during the settlement period, particularly after the potato blight ravaged parts of the region in the mid nineteenth century. Nor were they the only ones to lend support to Scottish Gaels. One minister, who labored among the Presbyterian Gaels in Cape Breton wagered that "... there is not a place in the whole world professing Christianity where there are so many families so near to each other and so utterly destitute as our poor countrymen on this Island are" (Quoted in Patterson 1978: 88). Perhaps for that reason, Robert MacDougall, who wrote a Gaelic guide to Scottish emigrants intending to come to North America, spoke out against settlement in Cape Breton:

It is the coldest and has the worst land, and because of this, those who have money and are well informed are setting out for Canada, and leaving the Cape behind them. It is also the closest and least expensive to reach, and because it is, many poor Gaels went there first, and because they went, many of their *poor* relatives will follow. The *poorest* folk who live in America came from Scotland; the *poorest* folk in America live there, and the *poorest* folk who go to America from Scotland continue to go there...(MacDougall 1998, 122).

Since the colonial government routinely answered requests for assistance from individuals and groups the virtual absence of community memories that describe this assistance makes widespread memories of support provided by the Mi'kmaq all the more noteworthy. Since both sources are recorded in the written history of the region, why is only one recalled so readily by tradition bearers? A couple of theories may be suggested. First, government assistance generally came only when requested, often after settlers outlined their desperation in a petition

pleading with colonial officials for help. Mi'kmaq assistance was more informal, sometimes mutually beneficial, and devoid of public humiliation. In this way it avoids conflicting with popular depictions of the immigrants as independent and strong. Acknowledging the support and friendship settlers received may also serve a need to depict their role in colonization in positive terms. Perhaps most importantly, Mi'kmaq support may have been more memorable to Gaels since it came from what seemed an unlikely source.

After all, early immigrants had arrived in the province with a frightening image of the Mi'kmaq. Michael MacDonald, the first Highlander to settle in Inverness County, came over from Prince Edward Island in 1775. He spent the first winter by himself, erecting a stockade as protection from potential attacks from the Mi'kmaq. According to county historian John L. MacDougall, the lonely pioneer never went out without “the axe in one hand, the gun in the other, and his heart in his mouth, in fear of Indians, bears, wildcats and ghosts” (1922, 190). Angus MacDonald, the first Highlander to acquire land along the Gulf Shore, was similarly wary of the Mi'kmaq. He eventually abandoned his property due to their presence in a nearby encampment (Campbell and MacLean 1974, 60).

Over time, however, the balance between these two groups shifted. Mi'kmaq were quickly outnumbered by immigrants in even the most remote areas of their traditional territory. Although widespread settlement came late to Cape Breton, it arrived with a tidal wave of humanity. Entire landscapes were transformed within a generation. Forests were turned to fields, and lonely valleys were altered by the sound of industry. The island population swelled, tripping over itself to catch up to the mainland, and increasing from 2,500 in 1801 to 55,000 in 1851 (Hornsby 1986, 77). Within a few years the Commissioner of Indian Affairs summarized the condition of the Mi'kmaq as “destitute and miserable” (Chearnley 1861).

Despite sharing a similar history of dislocation and marginalization, Scottish Gaels routinely ignored and disregarded indigenous claims to land in Nova Scotia. Eager to take possession of the most fertile properties, settlers pushed aside indigenous residents. Peter MacKenzie Campbell, who was raised in Johnstown, Richmond County, linked this attitude to their history, “It was something new for the Highlanders to be classed as a people worthy of being accorded property rights, and so they grasped the opportunity without giving too much thought to any question of ethics which may have been involved” (1978, 45). Given their history of dislocation and marginalization, Highlanders could show a surprising lack of insight into the role they played in doing the same to Mi’kmaq. Consider, for instance, the following description of the settlement of East Bay, likely written by Fr. Michael MacKenzie, and published in January 1931:

The Indians were quite numerous here when the first Scotch settlements were made.... and they acted as if they were lords and masters of the whole country. They were saucy and imposed in many ways on the few white people who first settled in the country....While they were strong and numerous they had their own way. They also took care to select the best lands adjacent to the best fishing places. (*Mosgladh* 1931, 1)

Despite the relatively insignificant amount of land reserved for Mi’kmaq in Cape Breton, even that proved too much for some settlers. They squatted on lands reserved for the First Nation, ignoring government appeals to vacate the area. Whycocomagh and Wagmatcook were flash points for this friction. Both were sought-after locations featuring fertile soil along rivers and lake frontage that eased transportation. Inaccurate and confusing surveys—a perennial problem in the colony—meant some settlers were granted land that overlapped with the reservation while others simply squatted there, assuming it was vacant. By the mid-nineteenth century, the situation was alarming. A report submitted to the provincial secretary claimed,

That the Micmacs' fathers were sole possessors of these regions is a matter of no weight with the Scottish emigrants. They are by no means disposed to leave the aborigines a resting place in the Island of Cape Breton; and it will not be easy for any Commissioner holding a seat in the Provincial Assembly, either from Cape Breton or Inverness, to do justice to the Indians to retain the good will of his constituents. (Dodd and Crawley letter to George, 1845)

Arguing reservation lands were going to waste—and having refused to leave their newly built homes in the first place—settlers eventually persuaded the government to grant them lawful title to the land despite appeals from the Mi'kmaq. Though not unsympathetic to the plight of the indigenous inhabitants, colonial officials were disinclined to spend the money required to take the squatters to court. Nor did they have the tools required to forcibly evict them (MacLeod 1995, 295). To those in charge, it was clear that removing the Gaels posed more of a threat to local stability than attempting to placate the Mi'kmaq.

Suggestions of this friction are retained in narratives preserved in oral tradition. The following account is a good example. It relates to the arrival of Angus Cameron in Margaree Forks, Inverness County. Though told from the perspective of the settlers, it conveys a sense of the frustration and indignation that must have been common to Mi'kmaq in nineteenth century Nova Scotia. Mary Belle Cameron, a grand-daughter of the settler involved, tells the story:

Well, Donald and Angus came down from Pictou County, where they had grown-up. They were looking for land, which was to be given to new settlers. And they found two farms to their liking on the west side of the river. Donald took the first—I think it was two-hundred acres—and Angus took the next.

Not long after they were there and they were clearing land an Indian and his wife stopped to talk to them. The Indian was angry. He claimed that the land on which Angus was making a home was his. Angus told him it was all right, he could stay on it. The government had given it to him but the Indian could stay onto it if he wanted to and they could both have the use of it. But that didn't suit the Indian. He wanted it as his own. So they talked back and forth and the Indian looked at Angus and he said,

“We are about the same size and approximately the same age. Can you wrestle?” Angus said yes. “Then we will wrestle. And if I put you down, the land will be mine, but if you put me down, the land will be yours. And they'll be no argument.”

And so the two men start to wrestle. The Indian's wife stood by and encouraged her husband in two words, Dig and Nassi, which meant do your best. The two men struggled for some time back and forth but at last the white man put the Indian down.

The Indian got up, didn't seem to be very angry, and he went off, himself and his wife, to the canoe. This Indian had a camp down below Pleasant Bay. He lived to be very old and as long as he lived anyone from Margaree who would turn up in his part of the country he would ask them if Angus Cameron was still living. And when he was told that Angus Cameron was gone, he said,

"Ahh, that one man next to God I was afraid of." And that was the story of the Whiteman and the Indian. (M. B. Cameron 1972)

Remarkably this story appears to be grounded in the historical record. Margaree Forks was the scene of a tense land dispute between Highlanders and Mi'kmaq starting in 1830. Despite the fact they were reserved for members of the local First Nation, settlers took possession of fertile lands located along the river and refused to move. Thomas Crawley, crown surveyor, was eventually forced to intervene on behalf of the Mi'kmaq. Robert Morgan takes up the story:

Though the land was commonly known as Indian Garden, the Scots refused to move on the grounds that the land was lying unused. Crawley took them to court and the Scots were told to move. They refused and eventually took all but 700 of the 4,500-acre Indian Garden. Nothing further was done to defend the Mi'kmaq. (Morgan 2008, 107)

Could this incident represent the historical basis for the narrative above? Considering both stories are situated in the same area, during the same period, it certainly seems probable. In any event, the account successfully shifts responsibility for the displacement of an indigenous population away from the settlers. While land is taken by force, the narrator goes to some length to show both parties were equally matched and that the property was won in a fair and equitable manner. This is a significant departure from the historical record, in which Mi'kmaq rights were clearly disregarded, but as Barbara Johnstone observes, "People use stories to manipulate social reality" (1990, 130).

Acknowledging his defeat, the man who challenged Angus Cameron quietly walked away never to return. In this act of submission, did settlers and their descendants see their own

departure from Scotland? Many undoubtedly hoped the Mi'kmaq would concede their defeat too and disappear from sight. Such a response appears to emerge in a story from Pictou County. It concerns the first wave of settlers to arrive from Highland Scotland. According to legend, the passengers of the *Hector*—often described as the local equivalent of the *Mayflower*—persuaded the captain to allow a young piper, who arrived late without the required fare, to travel with them in exchange for his music. Upon their arrival in the New World, the piper led the settlers off the *Hector* to the sounds of the Highland bagpipes. Leonard Reid takes up the account:

A traditional story in Pictou County is that the Micmac Indians were hiding in hopes of ambushing the settlers when they stepped ashore. Their plans soon changed when the Highlanders stepped ashore to the wailing of John McKay's wailing pipes. The Indians were terrified of the sounds coming from the piper and fled into the woods allowing the settlers to step ashore in safety. (1973, *The Hector Piper*)

Though unwelcomed by the Mi'kmaq, Highland settlement is once again characterized as nonviolent. The Mi'kmaq retreated, giving up their land and quietly disappearing into the forest. This is as much a myth as any other. Though comparatively peaceful, settlement in the region was not without suffering, dispossession and exclusion. However, the mental omission of this reality has been essential to solidifying notions of this region as a Highland community. This follows a familiar pattern since "...the construction of places is more often than not achieved through the exclusion of some 'other' – a constitutive outside" (Cresswell 2013, 97).

At their core these settlement narratives share one fundamental message: they assert the right to land claimed by Scottish Gaels. No sense of manifest destiny exists in this material. Instead, Mi'kmaq consented to their settlement in the region, providing them with a space to call their own. In this way, local stories suggest, Scottish Gaels became the rightful owners of the land in Nova Scotia. Yet the prominence of this theme and the legends it inspires is significant, suggesting sensitivity to this issue and recognition of the rights of the Mi'kmaq First Nation.

After all, none of these stories suggests true land ownership came with a grant signed by the King. The next chapter expands on this theme, asking what settlement narratives tell us about how this immigrant community came to feel at home in Nova Scotia. Exploring local traditions about settlement, it evaluates their value to the historical record and meaning to contemporary residents.

Chapter Five

Settlement and Expansion

The relative scarcity of material describing the emigration process stands in contrast to the number of stories residents continue to tell about clearing and settling a new land. Given that emigration and settlement occurred during roughly the same period, this comparative discrepancy suggests the enduring hold stories about settlement have on local consciousness. More to the point, it suggests a break from Scotland and growing sense of belonging in Nova Scotia.

On the whole, oral and written traditions about settlement can be divided into three stages. The earliest references emphasize how inexperienced and intimidated immigrants were in the region, their unfamiliarity with the local landscape, and its indigenous inhabitants. This material soon transitions into descriptions of the punishing work they accomplished, clearing land and building houses. Suffering and learning, immigrants overcome obstacles both physical and legal. The third stage portrays the result: settlers as masters of their domain, skilled and confident, independent and industrious.

While local traditions offer insight into how immigrants were impacted by historical episodes, they also challenge common misconceptions about their lives. For example, contrary to the popular notion that settlers immediately felt at home in Nova Scotia because of a supposed resemblance to Scotland, many immigrants actually felt completely out of place upon their arrival and were overwhelmed by the challenges posed by settlement. Dependent on the revenue generated by passengers, emigrant agents often exaggerated the attributes of the New World. Some even worked for landlords who wanted to see tenants vacate their lands. Not long after settling in Pictou County, the Bard MacLean used his poetic talents to rail against such duplicity,

accusing emigrant agents of using lies to entice Gaels across the Atlantic.² Despite the compelling nature of his verse, we should remember that it articulates a privileged position; poorer settlers always have more to gain and less to lose through emigration. Yet even the most satisfied settlers faced a new environment and landscape that presented significant challenges.

Coming from a nearly treeless landscape, Scottish Gaels found the thick forests especially daunting. Allan MacArthur told folklorist Margaret Bennett his grandparents were so alarmed when they first saw Cape Breton they regretted leaving Scotland: “*Nuair a chunnaig mo Sheanair ’s mo Sheanamhair an t-àit, nam biodh long a’ dol a dh’Alba air ais, cha tigeadh iad air tir, ach bha ’m bàta dol do dh’Astrailia*” (Bennett 1989, 41) (When my grandfather and grandmother saw the place, if the boat had been going back to Scotland, they wouldn’t have landed; but the boat was going to Australia).

As they came ashore, it seems likely the full weight of the physical and social transition emigration entailed was brought to bear on settlers. Jim Watson told me about an initial reaction

² In the following verse, the Bard MacLean complains about the role emigrant agents played in luring Scottish Gaels to Nova Scotia.

*Nuair theid na drobhairean sin ‘g ur n-iarraidh,
‘S ann leis na briagan a ni iad feum,
Gun fhacal firinn a bhith ‘g a innse
‘S an cridhe diteadh na their am beul;
Ri cur am fiachaibh gu bheil ‘s an tir seo
Gach ni a’s priseile tha fo’n ghrein.
Nuair thig sibh innte gur beag a chi sibh
Ach coille direachd toirt dhibh an speur*

When these cattle-drovers come after you,
They do their job with lies,
not uttering a word of truth,
their heart denying what their mouth says,
Representing that everything desirable under the sun is in this land.
But when you reach it, there’s little you’ll see
But tall forests shutting out the sky from you. (Dunn 1991, 19)

described by Mickey MacNeil (*Migi Bean Nilleag*), who lived in Rear Iona, Victoria County: “I remember him telling me about, I think it was his great-great grandmother, landing on the shore down here, at fourteen years of age, beside herself in tears, looking at the surrounding countryside and knowing that this was going to be her new home” (Watson 2015).

Certainly the task immigrants faced was daunting, both physically and socially. Rob Dunbar stresses that for Highland settlers there was “... no greater crisis than that brought on by the departure from the Old World and the challenge of rebuilding Gaelic communities in the New” (2008, 25). Many immigrants arrived with little money and few material possessions. One group of settlers included children who were so hungry they dug up their seed potatoes to eat while their father walked to North Sydney for a bag of flour (Morgan 2008, 115). According to Alice Smith, who grew up in North River, Victoria County, another moving scene played out along the North Shore, one of the last areas settled by Scottish Gaels in Nova Scotia:

But there wasn't a soul here. The boat came from Scotland, they tell me, with so many on it. They launched down at the beach here, *Bits' Iain Bhàin*. That was the name of the people that came, *Iain Bhàin*. She was going to have a baby. The baby was born down there, on the beach. Now, you put yourself in their place, coming there and no house. Where would you turn to? Nothing to eat except what they brought with them, and that couldn't have been very much. No stores, no houses. Everything here was woods. You know, I often think of that. I said to myself, “What a grim world was facing them.” (MacEachen 1995/96, 10)

Compounding this bleak situation, Highland settlers often lacked the most basic expertise to survive in their new surroundings. Confronting an unfamiliar forest and unforgiving climate, immigrants needed to develop a host of new skills in short order. No doubt there were desperate days as settlers came to terms with their new circumstances. Lord Selkirk describes a typical scene in Prince Edward Island:

An emigrant set down in such a scene feels almost the helplessness of a child. He has a new set of ideas to acquire: the knowledge which all his previous experience has

accumulated, can seldom be applied; his ignorance as to the circumstances of his new situation meets him on every occasion. (Selkirk 1984, 169)

Local tradition maintains colourful examples of this lack of local expertise. A settler in Pictou County thought she saw a bear and shot it nine times—it was later identified as a porcupine (MacKay 1980, 145). Another settler tried to fell trees on his property by using an axe to chip away at them like a beaver (Fraser 2015). Even when the proper knowledge was acquired, new skills took time and patience to develop:

One of the settlers on the Four Mile Brook having been engaged one day hacking at the big trees, which grew on his lot, with all the awkwardness of a Scotchman, becoming tired, sat down, and losing heart altogether, began to cry. His wife coming out, asked what was the matter. He told her his feelings. She immediately returned to the house, put on an old coat of his, and coming back seized the axe and commenced an attack upon a tree. He burst out laughing, took heart again, was never so discouraged afterwards, and ultimately became independent. (Patterson 1877, 224)

Refined through time and collective ownership—and molded by the storytelling tradition—historical incidents like this start to resemble folktales. After all, is a story about a wife rallying her despairing husband so different from one about a girl using magic to rescue a hero before he gives up? A moment in time becomes a story, its retention suggesting its significance. While the incident above reminds us how inexperienced settlers were in the forest, the scale of the challenge they faced, and the role perseverance played in their success, it also hints at larger issues. Laurie Stanley-Blackwell and I have recently argued that local traditions avoid framing physical and psychological strength in terms of gender (2016). Hardly the norm in nineteenth century Canada, this story certainly fits that mold. Whatever hardships they faced, local tradition maintains men and women faced them together in Gaelic Nova Scotia.

One of the greatest challenges confronting settlers was confusion over government land grants and surveys. Between 1790 and 1808 land grants were restricted in Nova Scotia. This followed a period in which they were given away. Adhering to its own rules and regulations,

Cape Breton was a separate colony until 1820. While large numbers of immigrants began arriving on the island after 1802, settlement was officially discouraged until 1817. In both cases, restrictions on settlement did little to stem the flow of immigrants, according to historian Tony MacKenzie: “If they could not get a grant they chopped a few trees, made a fire, and squatted. Their claims were usually recognized later” (2003, 123). Lacking the manpower to enforce regulations, colonial officials, including the surveyor general, H. W. Crawley, appeared frustrated by unorganized settlement but resigned to its reality: “People learn to look upon the orders of the Govt. as mere matters of form, and conclude that they may do as they please, and that the surest way of obtaining land is to take it, without the delay of asking leave, and to plunder at pleasure” (Hornsby 1986, 87).

When restrictions were eventually relaxed in the region, land grants were provided retroactively. Though costs were low and land was readily available, shifting regulations and inaccurate surveys created confusion: “Many surveyors were woefully lacking in experience and training in the art of land surveying. In many cases, these men apparently were old seamen, using marine compasses as quite often the bearings given are in marine terminology...” (Dickie 1957, 3). Writing nearly a century ago, Michael D. Currie attributes some of the initial confusion to Gaels themselves, claiming they “were not accurate in judging distance of dimensions in land covered in forest” (Quoted in MacMillan 2001, 625).

In the end, the results were predictable: immigrants settled, built homes and raised families on land they did not own. A recurrent subject of colonial attention, large numbers of people were still without official title to their properties in 1854: “It has been confidently asserted that not more than one-half of the farming population in the island hold their property by grants or titles derived from the crown” (Nova Scotia House of Assembly 1854). Because many

settlers were located in remote areas, conflicting claims became problematic, producing distress according to a newspaper article from 1850:

The tenure of lands in the Island of Cape Breton, appearing to demand legislation, that Titles may be confirmed and litigation averted... so miserably defective is the system, if such it can be called, now can be pursued in this Island. It becomes our imperative duty to call upon every inhabitant of the three counties to raise his voice against the continuance of that scandalous arrangement whereby the poor though industrious settler, is sold over his head, and his wife and little ones driven from their home, without the slightest notice having been given him. (Howard 1992, 15)

Memories of the confusion this caused are retained in oral tradition. Angus Currie, who was raised in MacAdam's Lake, Cape Breton County, recalled a story about a pioneer from Beaver Cove, Cape Breton County. Having cleared a large lot of land in the area without assistance, the settler was confronted by officials making a survey of the area. They explained that someone else actually owned the property and he would have to move. Demoralized and defeated, the settler returned home, saying to his wife, "I wish you'd take me out to the woodpile and cut the head off me" (Currie 2006). Maxie MacNeil provides another example. Though tinged with humor, it also conveys the sense of exasperation an inefficient and confusing land grant caused settlers. The account concerns the first MacKinnon in Highland Hill, Victoria County.

He made inquiries on land and he was roughly told that it was north of certain line, and that he was safe enough to build, and he started to build a shack there. He wasn't long building when a couple of people showed up and told him that,

"You're not building here, you're on the wrong—you gotta move a little bit further north."

And so he got a kind of an idea how far back and so, when he figured he was in the right spot he started to build again. But he wasn't too long at it when, not the same people, but another couple showed up. And of course told him that,

"You can't build here, this is *our* land."

So anyway, there wasn't much conversation taking place, he decided rather than cause any disturbance he moved back a little bit more, up the hill. Which actually turned out to be Highland Hill. So anyway, he started to build and after he was building a day or two, getting his cabin up, he seen this fellow coming. And he had his big muzzle-loader

leaning up against the bungalow he was building, but before the guy opened his mouth to say one way or the other, he told him,

‘If you got a question for me, the fellow who’ll answer, I’ll refer to you to this fellow leaning up against the building.’

“No, no” the neighbour said, “No, no, I’ve come here to help you.” (MacNeil 2004)

In both these stories the physical strength of the immigrants—who are able to clear land and build shelters without assistance—stands in contrast to their powerlessness when confronted with rules and regulations enacted by the establishment. This material underscores the subaltern position maintained by Scottish Gaels, who often arrived in the region with little money, formal education or English. Without rights to their traditional land in Scotland, the Gaels found themselves at the mercy of a disorganized land grants system in Nova Scotia.

In the end, we are left with the impression that only their tenacity allowed them to overcome such challenges. After all, even the settler in the first story persevered—Currie tells us he went on to clear several hundred other acres in Rear Boisdale, using fieldstones to build rock walls that can still be seen today. Such a timeless message undoubtedly encourages the retention of these stories. Recalling the formulaic structure of many folktales, the three episodes in which the action occurs in the second narrative may also provide a model of behavior; MacKinnon is patient and respectful when asked to move the first two times, but prepared to fight the third. Fortunately, in this case, the stranger is merely offering assistance. As this narrative suggests, a sense of cooperation was essential to settlers overcoming initial obstacles.

Barrie Fraser, a talented artist with a passion for local history, provides a good example of this communal spirit in Lake Ainslie, Inverness County (Fraser 2015). It concerns a settler to the area who thought he was completely alone. On travelling to the nearest store one day, he was alerted to the presence of another pioneer in the area. Not long thereafter, his fire went out. The

settler decided to pursue this unknown neighbour for help. Finding him further down the shore, the man was given a hot ember by his neighbour. With this, he was able to rekindle his own flame. Containing both literal and figurative significance—one settler providing comfort and security to another—this story makes clear the vital importance social ties played in sustaining early communities.

Most modern residents know little about the nature of the first shelters built during the settlement period, outside of the fact that they were log-houses. Historian Michael Hornsby describes a typical example: “Pioneer shanties, common among the Highland Scots, were usually constructed from round logs cross notched at their corners, their single-sloped roofs from battens covered with turf or bark. The one-room interior had a dirt floor and minimal furnishings” (Hornsby 1986, 41). Often intended to be temporary, few of these structures survived into the twentieth century. Daniel M. R. MacNeil heard many were dismantled and used as a ready source of firewood: “Them log cabins they had, you know, I mean they were built so good that they’d last for years and years but they used to take them down and burn the wood” (MacNeil 2003). Folklorist Richard MacKinnon points out that many others were so altered over time their original form became hard to discern (MacKinnon 2009, 104-117).

While most pioneer dwellings were simple wood structures, atypical examples stand out in oral tradition. Lorrie MacKinnon recently restored the home her ancestor, Ian *Ruadh* MacMaster, built in Creignish, Inverness County. A stone building, it combines construction techniques and materials typical of Scotland with architectural features borrowed from North America. According to local tradition, MacMaster originally built a log cabin further up on the property, but it blew apart during a storm: “Creignish is a very windy place and the property was not very flat, so off it went. He vowed to build a home that would withstand the wind, and so the

second house was made of stone. I am his great-great-great-grand-daughter and the house is indeed still standing” (Email message to author, February 26, 2016).

Fr. Allan MacMillan provides another example. According to local tradition, his ancestors emigrated as a large extended family, reuniting in Upper Leitches Creek, Cape Breton County. Instead of building several small log houses in the area, they chose to build an exceptionally large one where they could all spend the winter together (MacMillan 2015). Archie Kerr, who was raised in the northern community of Cape North, Victoria County, provides an even more remarkable description of a pioneer structure and its innovative builder:

When my great-grandfather came over from Scotland, he built a house right at the foot of that steep hill. And I heard my grandfather tell the story often. The house, of course, was very small, no doubt, but he said one side of the roof was one slab off a tree. Imagine the size of the trees! Even if it was a small house. And they had running water, which was very unusual in those days. There was a spring just above the house, where the incline started up. And they had a wooden trough in the spring, and it ran through the side of the house and out the other side. And it ran year round. And they had a hole in the bottom of the trough with a plug in it. And they’d pull the plug out and fill the bucket and put the plug back in. (Kerr 2015)

These stories present the construction of pioneer homes in unusual, even whimsical, ways. A wooden house blows off a mountain, only to be replaced by a stone one that proves immovable; an extended family is so grateful to be reunited they build a giant log house where they can all live together. The house Archie Kerr describes—outfitted with running water and a roof made from a tree slab—could be lifted from a folktale itself. What should we make of this material? Is it all to be taken at face value? Or are more important messages embedded in these narratives?

Stories like these build bridges with the past, allowing residents to see their ancestors as more human, likeable and interesting. Hardly a people consumed by struggle and drudgery—living in houses that reflect these dreary circumstances—they were curious, imaginative, and

inventive. Indeed, they were very much like we might want to be. Of course, the upshot is that we can never really know these people. Settlers once lived in our world, shared our names and properties, but they remain unknowable, even mysterious. Who were they? What motivated their actions?

Stories are an attempt to put flesh on old bones: to bring people to life. Barre Toelken has pointed out that songs are not only a way of knowing the past, but experiencing it (Toelken 2008, 95-96). In much the same way, these short accounts allow us to experience the lives of previous generations. But they can only go so far. Contemporary residents are left to draw conclusions about their ancestors based on the limited evidence at their disposal. Local traditions about the settlers, and their imprint on the physical landscape, shape discussions about them today. A popular question revolves around the specific locations where immigrants chose to settle.

Even when properties extended to the shore, pioneers sometimes built their homes a considerable distance from the water. Whether real or imagined, this became a settlement pattern associated with Scottish Gaels. Writing during the first part of the nineteenth century, Abraham Gesner observed: “Knowing that Germans are fond of low and moist situations, we could not fail to observe here the local feelings of the Highlanders, who choose another extreme, and climb the summits of the highest hills they can discover, when fixing their residence” (1836, 133). Contemporary writers have made similar observations, ascribing choices their ancestors made about property to their cultural origins. Even Alistair MacLeod, the author most closely associated with this community, writes that settlers “built their homes on the highest hills as if in dreams they anticipated attacks from a rival clan” (1997, ix). So well established is this notion, it forms the punch line in jokes like the following:

It was weather like Cape Breton is receiving this summer that made the late Duncan Alex MacIsaac muse about the dubious wisdom of the Scots. One snowy, blustery May

afternoon in a conversation he told me about the early migrations to the new world of the Americas. 'The Spanish went to South America where all they had to do was kick a tree to get their breakfast. The English went to places like Maryland where they had the best farming land available. But the damned Scotsman had to find a hill he could climb up to throw rocks down on his enemies, so he came to Cape Breton.' (*The Inverness Oran* Aug. 18, 1977)

Though modern residents consider housing plots along the water especially desirable, wind and cold may have deterred their ancestors from building in these same locations. Others note that settlers would prefer their homes to be located near the middle of their properties, which usually extended from the water, in order to minimize their distance from rear woodlots. Exceptions to the rule are explored in local tradition. Barrie Fraser attributes the choice one settler made to settle along the shore to his ignorance of the local environmental conditions: "You'd get that north-west wind off the lake. You might as well put the house up out in the middle of the ice. You know, there would be no shelter" (Fraser 2015). Gary George, who lives in Christmas Island, agrees: "Well, if it was up to me, I wouldn't live next to the water either! It's too damn damp and cold....I don't know if there would be anybody within so many hundred yards of the water. If they have a grant that runs back from the shore a mile and a quarter, well, you have a lot of land to pick from"(George 2015).

Writing about the locations settlers built their houses, Peter MacKenzie Campbell reasons that "...they had no previous knowledge of or experience with broad acres of level, fertile land, and so they didn't particularly seek out such tracts when they settled on this side of the Atlantic. Instead, they welcomed the sight of steep hills, rushing brooks and the sound of waves breaking upon rocky shores" (1978, 22). Catherine MacKenzie, who was brought up in Arisaig, Antigonish County, has often wondered about the location of her family home, high above the Northumberland Strait. Generations removed from Scotland, MacKenzie falls back on what she

has heard about the land Highlanders occupied in Scotland to better understand the properties they settled in Nova Scotia:

It was quite high and it seemed as though you could see all the water that was ever made. You could see from Pictou, Pictou Island, Prince Edward Island and all through the strait. The Northumberland Strait. And we assumed with the Highlanders, they just weren't taking any chances. They were gonna stay to the high ground.... As high as they could get. Well, I figured it was comfortable to them. That's where they lived, they lived in the Highlands. They were used to living on high ground. I don't think they expected the English would chase them all the way to Arisaig! (MacKenzie 2008)

During the restructuring of the Clearances, Highlanders were often relocated from inland areas to previously uninhabited stretches along the shore. Consequently the coastal nature of settlements there can be deceptive. On the other hand, the historical record is clear that immigrants first settled along the water in Nova Scotia, moving inland only when properties along the shore were no longer available. So how do we reconcile the impression they preferred the high ground of the interior, even when property was available along the shore? Were settlers propelled by superior knowledge of the natural world? Or driven by cultural traits inherited from Scotland?

Perhaps another local tradition can offer insight. Once properties along the shore were settled, immigrants looked to the interior. Backland areas were often explored following the summit ridges, which were usually drier (eg. H. Cameron 1972, 4). When properties were selected, settlers would start clearing from the top down. This may have contributed to the impression high ground was the ultimate goal. Importantly, this notion also allows residents to portray interior land—which was not the first choice for most immigrants—as preferable and traditional.

Of course, all of this is largely conjecture. In the end, what compelled individual settlers to choose specific portions of land will always remain open to speculation (Dunn [1953] 1991,

25). But the multiplicity of voices willing to weigh in on this topic indicates its importance, as Julie Cruikshank points out: “That a culture is shared does not mean that all individual interpretations will be the same, but it does guarantee that conflicting interpretations are significant” (1998, 43). By assigning impulses and instincts to people long dead, modern community members attempt to better understand their own surroundings and history. The explanations they provide—whether based on stereotypes, oral history, or jokes—help answer those questions. The present informs the past.

Regardless of where they settled, most immigrants faced the challenge of clearing land. Highlanders usually arrived in the region with a marked bias against woodlands. Popularly associated with chaos, bewilderment, danger, and the supernatural, forests were reviled and avoided by many European immigrants in North America. Seeing vast stretches of woodlands for the first time, immigrants often characterized them as barren, desert landscapes (MacLeod 1995, 6). Touring the region in 1791, Patrick Campbell, a Gaelic-speaking Highlander, described the scenery along the Bay of Fundy as “an endless space of forest, of miserable spruce, seemingly fit to be inhabited only by wild beasts” (1793, 19). Open land came to symbolize safety, order, and civilization in the colony for immigrants like Campbell. In her dissertation, Heather MacLeod claims that for many settlers clearing land was “...almost to enter the kingdom of heaven on earth, as the making of new land seemed to demonstrate the direct casual relationship between moral effort, sobriety, frugality, and industry and material reward” (1995, 10). Not surprisingly, it also represents the work their descendants are most likely to recall today. Consider, for instance, the following description of settlement provided by one-hundred year old Jessie MacDonald, who was raised in Gillisdale, Inverness County. Here the significance of clearing land is made explicit—equated with place-making itself:

JM: Thàinig ceithir bràithrean a-nall còmhla. Tha mi cinnteach gu'n cuala mi ach chan eil cuimhne agam gu dè an t-àite. 'S e Scotland. How do you say Scotland?

SM: An t-Seann Dùthaich?

JM: An t-Seann Dùthaich! Thàinig iad às an t-Seann Dùthaich. Thàinig ceithir, trì no cèithir dhiubh còmhla. 'S phòs iad mu'n cuairt a' South West.

SM: An do land iad ann am Margaree?

JM: Tha mi a' smaointinn gur ann a' sin a stad iad. They landed in Margaree.

SM: Agus dè rinn iad as a dheoghaidh sin?

JM: Tha mi cinnteach gu'n do chur iad nuas na craobhan; a' choille ghruamach a' chuir far a' bonn. Cha robh ann ach craobhan. Cha robh clear land ann dar a thàinig an fhir, am first fhir oirre. Dh'fheumadh iad àit' a dheanamh. (MacDonald 2016)

JM: Four brothers came over together. I'm certain that I heard, but I can't remember what place. It was Scotland. How do you say Scotland?

SM: The Old Country?

JM: The Old Country! They came from the Old Country. Four of them, three or four of them came together. And they married around the South West.

SM: Did they land in Margaree?

JM: I believe it was there they stopped. They landed in Margaree.

SM: And what did they do after that?

JM: I'm certain they cut down the trees; felled the gloomy forest. There was nothing but trees. There wasn't any clear land when the men came, the first men on it. They had to make a place.

Because forests in the region were usually composed of old growth trees, the task itself was onerous. Donald MacDonald, who was raised in Loch Lomond, Richmond County, heard about the size of the trees pioneers encountered in the area and saw ample evidence of their presence in houses they constructed. When we spoke several years ago, MacDonald marveled at the work required to clear large sections of forest:

Uell, tha a' choill' an diugh, chan eil ann ach bioran do choille. Caol, beag. Nuair a thàinig iadsan a-nall, a Thighearna, bha craobhan cho mòr siod mun cuairt. Dh'obraich iad gu cianail fhios agad, nuair a thàinig iad a seo gun sìon. (MacDonald 2007)

Well, the woods today, it's nothing but a forest of twigs. Small, skinny. When they came over, Oh Lord, the trees were as big as that around [Extends his hands out to indicate several feet in diameter]. They worked exceedingly you know, when they came over here without anything.

According to oral tradition, the nature of the forest may have facilitated this process. Settlers in Christmas Island are said to have sought out large deciduous trees with wide canopies that prevented smaller trees from growing underneath. Once a tree like this was identified and removed, a ready-made clearing was available (George 2015). Jim Watson has recorded that other immigrants gravitated towards areas where windfalls made clearing property easier (Watson 2000, 274). Larger sections of forests were cleared following a pattern common to other parts of North America. Possessing relatively little economic value to early immigrants, trees were cut down and burned. Scottish Gaels referred to land cleared in this manner as *Coille Loisgte* (Burnt Woods) or *Coille Dhubh* (Black Woods). Infused with ashes, the soil is said to have yielded excellent crops. Allan MacLeod, who was raised in Catalone, Cape Breton County, told me about this process, which was still current in his youth:

We done it. My father and I. Couple of patches like that, for pasture; extend the pasture out a little bit. Oh, we had quite a bit, two big pieces. Course, then you'd burn it and maybe not use it that same spring, but then next spring, you'd burn her all flat. You didn't put manure or anything on it; you couldn't anyway: the stumps. Plant between the stumps, the potatoes. Golly, the best potatoes you ever ate. So we knew then the ground was good! So then, in a couple of years time, the stumps had loosened up enough that you could pull them out with the horse. And once you got them out, you harrowed it and you had a field for anything. (MacLeod 2015)

As settlers became skilled in the forest, their collective effort made a powerful impact. Massive areas of forest were cleared. In fact, the availability of land and the fertility of ashes “encouraged rapid clearing, in some cases carried on to excess” (Gentilcore 1956: 394). Examining three centuries of ecological change in Nova Scotia, Heather MacLeod notes that “...the ardour with which settlers attacked forests went far beyond sustenance needs and left an ecological legacy still felt today” (1995, 10). Contemporary residents often reflect on the amount of land cleared by earlier generations with a combination of wonder and bewilderment. During

an evening of storytelling in Ottawa Brook, Victoria County, neighbours Martin MacNeil, Carlie MacNeil and Doug MacDonald, found humour in the destructive campaign their ancestors waged against the forest:

MM: You gotta remember – they cleared everything. Burned it!

CM: Thank God they didn't have a four-wheeler, there wouldn't be a tree in Cape Breton!

MM: No, there wasn't a whole lot of trees left anyway.

DM: No money in trees. Money in hay, money in clover, right? Sheep. Cows. That's where they went.

MM: But like I said, they cleared everything. My understanding, it was told to me that you could stand on a hill and see to New Glasgow! (MacNeil *et al* 2015)

No longer strangers in a strange land, Scottish Gaels had mastered the skills required to work in the woods, and in the process altered their perception of their surroundings. This had a vital impact on their sense of belonging in the region, providing visual evidence of their power and presence. But aesthetic concerns also propelled deforestation. As the following anecdote told by D. A. MacInnis implies, clear, open fields were associated with both progress and beauty:

Well, I'm going to tell a little story about an old couple that lived out in back of the Margarees. Times were tough and he had a little sawmill. They lived on a farm and it was nothing but rock piles and briar bushes.

Anyway, this winter, there was an awful snowstorm. It snowed three or four days. When the storm cleared off, the old lady got up early in the morning and the sun was shining. It was beautiful.

Nothing but diamonds, all over the snow. You couldn't see a bush, you couldn't see a rock.

Well, she said, "Hughie, get up and see the beautiful farm you have today!" (Caplan 2000, 96)

Though humorous, this anecdote contains a bittersweet undertone. The couple it features is old and unlikely to ever fully realize the vision of a beautiful farm they so desire. Only the snow allows them to imagine its appearance. The work required to transform forests into fields was tremendous, requiring years of back-breaking labour. Rusty Bittermann claims most

immigrants would take more than a decade to clear twenty-five acres (1998, 17). Many were unable to even do that. Allan MacLeod grew up hearing reports of the work required of immigrants, concluding that: “They had nice farms at the end. It took them forever I guess. It took them a lifetime to get it to what they wanted” (MacLeod 2015). Of course, not all their labours were rewarded; the work sometimes required more than a generation. But as the anecdote above suggests, inspiration can be found in possibilities as much as progress.

Today, some residents interpret a self-sacrificing quality to this work, seeing in settlers a selfless dedication to the welfare of their descendants. Virtues are thus assigned to people long dead based on the stories we tell about them today. Consider, for instance, how Joanne MacIntyre reflects on the amount of work required to clear and cultivate land in Mabou Coal Mines:

And again, I go back to the amount of work. Like, for us to take a chainsaw out and haul lumber out of a forested place is a pile of work. To do that without machinery, with simple hand tools, and horses—and that these people did this...and they did it for us. Even though they didn’t know it was us they were doing it for necessarily at the time. And maybe they did. Maybe they had a better idea of future than we do. There’s a lot more selflessness in that generation than in ours, I think. (MacIntyre 2015)

Perhaps for this reason, many residents regret the extent to which the forest has been allowed to reclaim farmland in Nova Scotia. Remarks about how the fields are closing in are a recurrent theme in everyday conversations between friends and family in the region. Even some younger residents express concern that open land is filling with trees. Once again, consider what MacIntyre has to say on the subject:

I look up at the hill and I see where the cattle used to be, or I see those tree lines kind of encroaching. And it’s funny that—I consider myself somewhat of an environmentalist—but to see pasture filling in with trees just kills me.

And I heard someone—there was a lady from down Broad Cove way said, “Don’t plant a tree when I die, everyone I know please cut one down!”

And that’s how I feel! (MacIntyre 2015).

While other ethnic groups gravitated towards population centers, or forged communities that were primarily dependent on the fisheries, Scottish Gaels were inexorably drawn to land with agricultural potential in Nova Scotia. Recalling settlement patterns around Framboise, Richmond County, tradition bearer Norman MacLeod noted the pattern: “That’s what they say here: the Scotsman took to the woods and the Frenchman stayed by the shore. And the French always colonized together, while the Scots, they couldn’t get far enough apart” (Cummings *et al.*, 1984: 18). In addition to suggesting a desire for large parcels of land, this trend may have reflected a traditional way of life in rural Scotland, where fishing “...did not have much commercial or social importance for these people, not even among those living on the islands or along coastlines, at least not until their farming livelihoods were denied them” (Wagner and Davis 2004, 322). Writing about an informal system of fishing zones maintained by descendants of Highland settlers in Antigonish County—which assigns access to fishing grounds based on land ownership—John Wagner and Anthony Davis argue that they reflect a worldview fixated on land:

The evident pattern is one that associates social identities, senses of place, people, and way of life with farming and herding, not fishing. This has been the case at least until very recently. These qualities, no doubt, embody and reflect key attributes of Highland and Islands Scot’s culture and the value it associates with being on and of the land. ...It is, in fact, the strong attachment of Highlands and Island Scots to the land, rather than to the sea, that allows us to understand the origin of the berth system. (Wager and Davis 2004, 326)

Map-making with contemporary tradition bearers supports this conclusion. Asked to draw a map of their community, few tradition bearers paid much attention to the water, even after spending a lifetime along the shore. Consider, for example, the following map of Benacadie Pond. During the settlement period land was divided into narrow strips extending from the lake. Omitting the lake completely, Kay Porttribny shows only its influence on property lines in a map

A hand-drawn map of a coastal area, oriented with North at the top. The map shows a coastline with several labeled points and features:

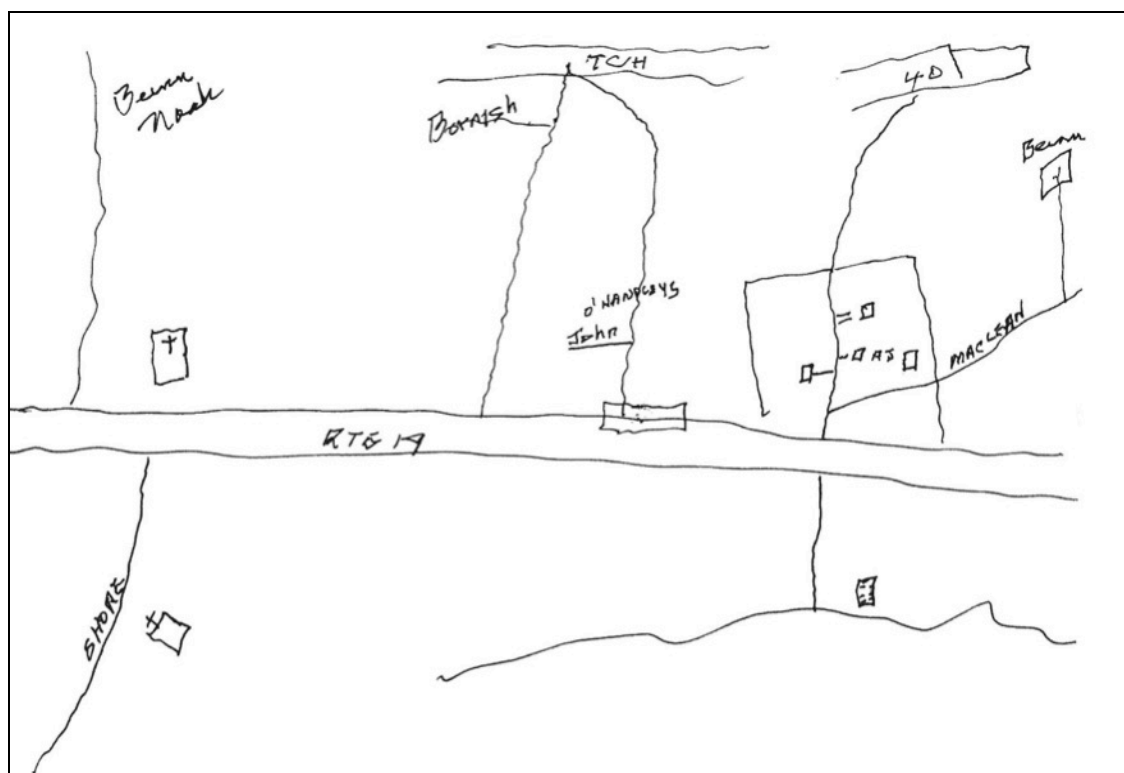
- Top Left:** A small peninsula or headland labeled "Alm's" and "H. S. S." below it.
- Top Center:** A point labeled "Shoreline" with a dashed line indicating a boundary or path.
- Top Right:** A point labeled "John's" and "John's" below it.
- Center:** A point labeled "Banks" and "Banks" below it.
- Bottom Left:** A point labeled "Store" and "Store" below it.
- Bottom Center:** A point labeled "Katherine" and "Katherine" below it.
- Bottom Right:** A point labeled "John's" and "John's" below it.
- Far Right:** A point labeled "John's" and "John's" below it.
- Far Right (Top):** A point labeled "John's" and "John's" below it.
- Far Right (Bottom):** A point labeled "John's" and "John's" below it.
- Far Right (Far Bottom):** A point labeled "John's" and "John's" below it.

A compass rose is located in the upper right corner, with "N" for North, "S" for South, "E" for East, and "W" for West. The map is drawn with simple lines and includes some handwritten notes and corrections.

This is not to suggest fishing was unimportant to Scottish Gaels in Nova Scotia: it was critical to thousands. But settlement patterns demonstrate that land was the primary consideration for most settlers, with water access being a highly desirable advantage. The reverse is simply not true. Scottish Gaels did not choose to cluster around small harbors with access to the fisheries when tracts of potential agricultural land were available elsewhere. In the end, it seems clear most chose to see themselves as farmers who fished as opposed to fishermen who farmed.

119

not recognizing it as such” (1964, 34). Perhaps as a result, tradition bearers sometimes express bemusement at the land their ancestors cleared and settled in the region.



(5.2: Map of Judique drawn by A. J. MacDougall. Note the prominence of roads and property lines, in relation to the ocean, which appears as a line on the lower right.)

Speaking with author David Craig, Johnnie Allan MacDonald laughed at the rocky piece of property his ancestors selected over fertile plots available elsewhere, humorously suggesting they must have chosen it for its stony qualities since it reminded them of Scotland (Craig 1997, 99). Souter Strachan also found humour in the rocky piece of land his people settled in Framboise, telling me that: “*Bha gu leòr do chlachan air an àite seo 'son an Titanic a' chuir sìos!*” (There were enough stones on this place to sink the *Titanic*!) (Strachan and Morrison 2009).

This deprecatory humor finds a home in more formulaic narratives informed by the folktale tradition. Consider, for instance, the following narrative situated in Hillsdale, Inverness County, part of which was once known as *Ben Noah* (*Beinn Noah*: Noah's Mountain):

It's told that Donnchadh Mor (Big Duncan) MacMaster was trudging along the old Fortune road to River Denys when he was overtaken by the Honorable Peter Smyth in his fine buggy. Smyth was on his way to foreclose on some poor old woman and, with several roundabout questions, he tried pumping Donnchadh Mor for information.

This tactic got him nowhere so he asked Donnchadh Mor if he knew this particular woman.

"Yess, I do," Donnchadh Mor answered. He replied in the same non-committal fashion when asked if he knew her farm. By this time they had arrived at a small brook running through a particularly rocky section of land. Peter pulled off the road to let his horse slake its thirst. While the animal was drinking its fill Smyth inquired what the woman's land was like.

Pointing to a forlorn little patch of grass amidst a large crop of boulders, Donnchadh Mor remarked, "There is her pasture."

Somewhat disappointed, Smyth demanded, "If that is her pasture, what is the rest of her land like?"

"Just the same as that," replied MacMaster, "except there iss more rocks. In fact they call this place Ben Noah because it wass here Noah himself dumped the ballast from the Ark."

Peter Smyth, disgusted at wasting his time for such a sorry bit of land, immediately turned around and returned to Port Hood while Donnchadh Mor, pleased with the effect of his ready wit, continued on his way. (Gillis n.d.)

Recalling several traditional motifs, this story provides a good example of how narratives, bound up in socio-historical power relations, can challenge hegemonic institutions (Cruikshank 1998, 72). MacMaster not only outwitted Smyth—a notorious merchant and political figure in nineteenth century Inverness County—he foiled a foreclosure that would have left an impoverished, old woman homeless. Despite its legality, such an act clearly contravenes local ethical standards. Though lacking the legal and financial powers of Peter Smyth, a vulnerable woman was protected by a neighbour. Given the reciprocal and communal nature of work relationships in the region, such a lesson makes good sense. Because the storyline recalls tales in which the devil is overawed by a peasant (ATU 1030), the folkloric significance is also

important to recognize since residents likely recognized the subtle comparison between Smyth, coming to take land, and the Devil. While this anecdote allows residents to find humor in flawed land, it also underlines the strong sense of community that made up for this deficiency.

If some settlers had trouble identifying good land, they were not so different from immigrants throughout North America, who relied on the variety of trees found in a given area to give clues as to its soil composition (MacLeod 1995, 112). This practice was advocated by the colonial government, which noted that birch, beech, maple and oak, were found on good land while poorer soils fostered pine, spruce, hemlock and larch (See, for instance, McNab 1854). Of course, immigrants were also attentive to other signs of good grazing. In the following, Daniel M.R. MacNeil recalls how one family selected a piece of land on which to settle in central Cape Breton:

Chaidh Iain mac Dhòmhnaill Òig—bha mart aige, agus bha e a’ fuireach a-muigh air a’ chùl aig Pòd na Maiseadh.

Agus cha d’fhuair e mart air a’ lath’ a bh’ann a seo. Agus lean e ’n track aice, na luirgeann aice, agus ràinig e shìos ann a’ Castle Bay. Sin far an d’fhuair e mart. Agus bha àite briagha ann a sin – intreabhal mhór ann.

Thill e, ’s thuirt e ris a’ bheann, “Feumaidh sinn a’ dhol sìos ann a’ sin, a Chastle Bay,” os esan, “Tha àite ann a tha na’s fhèarr na tha a-muigh ann a’ seo.”

An ath latha, chaidh a bhean sìos còmhla ris agus thuirt i, “Tha an t-àite seo na’s fhèarr.”

Thug i leatha biadh agus start iad air togail taigh logaichean a’ latha a bha sin. Chaidh iad dhachaidh an oidhche sin agus an ath latha thill iad is thog iad taigh logaichean is thog iad, an uair sin, sabhal, agus chaidh iad a dh’fhuireach a’ Castle Bay. Tha na daoine aca ann fhathast. (MacNeil 2001)

John, son of young Donald, went—he had a cow, and he was living out in the Rear of Benacadie Pond.

And he didn’t find a cow on this day. And he followed her track, her prints, and he arrived down in Castle Bay. That’s where he found the cow. And there was a beautiful place there—a big interval.

He returned, and he said to his wife, “We must go down there, to Castle Bay,” he said, “There’s a place there that’s better than what’s out here.”

The next day his wife went down with him and she said, “This place is better.”

They took food with them and they started to build a log house that very day. They went home that night, and the next day they returned, and they built a log house and they then built a barn, and they went to live in Castle Bay. And their people are there yet.

Tracking a missing cow, a settler discovers a new home. Taken at face value, the account would seem a curious piece of oral history. As we will see, however, other stories featuring animals that steer people towards natural resources are found in local tradition. This theme suggests residents saw animals as having an innate understanding of their new surroundings: a quality sorely lacking in settlers. Taken together, this material reinforces the lack of local expertise settlers possessed and how much they had to discover about their new environment. Significantly, considering their religiosity, divine guidance rarely figures in these accounts. No heavenly visions direct their steps, nor prayers prompt their discoveries. Instead, settlers are guided by people and animals with a greater understanding of the local environment.

Of course, the other point this story raises involves mobility and relocation. As it happens, moving within communities, and the larger region as a whole, was quite common during the nineteenth century. Historian Colin S. MacDonald claims that “... from the time the first Highlanders came to Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia, there was for forty or fifty years thereafter a good deal of shifting to and fro, for family or religious reasons, or in the hope of getting better land or land on more favorable terms” (MacDonald n.d: 6). The following story provides a good example. It concerns a settler who relocated several times before making his final home in St. Columba, Victoria County—once again guided by his animals:

Mìcheal Mór a chanadh iad ris. Bha aon phàiste aige nuair a’ thàinig e a’ seo. Thàinig e a-nall a’ seo ann an 1817.

Air toiseach, bha e a’ fuireach ann Middle River, shuas ann am, o Pictou County, tha teansa. Agus an uair sin, thàinig e sìos gu Mabou. Bha e seachd bliadhna ann am Mabou. A’ phàirt, ris a’ chanadh iad Mabou Mines. Tha beinn ann a’ sin, beinn a fhuair a h-ainm as a’ dheoghaidh, Beinn Mhìcheil. Siod far a’ robh e a’ fuireach. Bha e seachd bhliadhna a’ fuireach ann.

An uair sin, dh'fhag e a' sin ann am meadhainn a' gheamhradh, dhrag e sleigh bheag as a' dheoghaidh agus a h-uile rud, gnothaichean, anns an t-sleigh bheag. 'S thàinig e sìos gu Washabuck. 'S an uair sin, nuair a' shettle e beinn Washabuck, ris a' canadh iad Peigidh Bhàin, Beinn Pheigidh Bhàin.

An uair sin, latha a bha seo, bha e 'coimhead airson a bheòthaichean. Thàinig e a' muigh dhan phòin. Oh my God, he saw cho briagha 's a bha e. "Uell, siod far a bheil mi ' dol a' shettleadh" ars esan. Thàinig e a-mach a St. Columba. Shiod mar a thàinig e a-mach a St. Columba. (MacNeil 2005)

They called him Big Michael. He had one baby when he came here. He came over here in 1817.

At first, he was living in Middle River, up in Pictou County, it seems. And then he came down to Mabou. He was seven years in Mabou. The part they call Mabou Mines. There is a mountain there, a mountain that was named after him. *Beinn Mhìcheil* [Michael's Mountain]. That's where he was living.

Then he left there, in the middle of winter, he dragged a little sleigh behind him, and everything, his stuff, was in the little sleigh. And he came down to Washabuck. And then, when he settled, a mountain in Washabuck that they called *Peigidh Bhàin* [Fair Peggy], *Beinn Pheigidh Bhàin* [Fair Peggy's Mountain].

And then, this day, he was looking for his animals. He came out to the pond. Oh my God, he saw how beautiful it was. "Well, this is where I'm going to settle" he said. He came out to St. Columba. That's how he came out to St. Columba.

Although local tradition maintains Big Michael relocated in order to be closer to family, Jimmy Columan MacNeil, who told the story to me, lived his whole life in St. Columba, and was proud to call it home. As a result, it seems likely its message, which praised the isolated, inland community over more prosperous areas along the water, resonated especially powerfully with him.

As this example makes clear, narratives about secondary migrations present settlers very differently from those about newly arrived immigrants. No longer are the Gaels out of place, at the mercy of the forest or Mi'kmaq. They are now confident and comfortable, prepared for local environmental conditions and eager to exploit natural resources. Once his wife joins him, the settler in the first account is able to start building a log cabin right away. Big Michael is so well adapted to his new home he thinks little of dragging a hand-sleigh halfway across Cape Breton in

the middle of winter. This is a radical change, showing an enduring awareness that settlement required a period of adjustment. But it also indicates a more profound transition: one suggesting a growing familiarity and comfort in Nova Scotia. Consider, for instance, how confident and capable the characters are in the next story, recalled by Willie Fraser. The account concerns his own ancestors, who first settled in Pictou County, before moving to Cape Mabou, Inverness County. Eventually, one made his way to the remote fishing community of Lowland Cove, not far from the northern tip of Cape Breton.

Fraser only visited the community once—it was abandoned generations ago—but he provides an evocative description of its way of life based on stories his father told. In this isolated location, Fraser informs us, caribou were brought down without guns, clothing was made on the loom, seals were hunted on the ice, and men and women grew exceptionally strong. No hint of weakness or inexperience here—opening with an introduction undoubtedly shaped by the storytelling tradition—Fraser depicts a people both skilled and independent.

Chuir iad seòl suas ris a' bhàta ann am Màbu. Latha eireachdail. 'S bha cù aca 's tuagh 's sàbh, beagan do dh'aodach, 's thog iad rithe sìos gu Cape North. Chaidh iad sìos gus na Lowlands, a Cape North. An robh thu riamh staigh na Lowlands?

Bha ceithir no còig thaighean ann a' sin—anns na Lowlands. Tha beinn mhór air an taobh seo, eadar na Lowlands agus Cheticamp, beinn mhór uamhasach, bha iadsan dìreach air a' ceann seo. 'S bha beinn mhór eile air an cùl mar seo, air an cùlaibh, agus bha pìos laghach do dh'fhearann ann a' sin, dìreach aig am flat a bha sin, bha ceithir no còig do thaighean ann, bha taigh sgoil aca ann, agus bha beòthichan aca, bhiodh dàmh aca 's bha crodh aca 'son am bleoghann, bhiodh eich aca, agus bhiodh sneachd mar sin aca a h-uile geamhradh. Sneachd.

An dòigh bheòlan a bh'aca, ann a' Cheap North, an uair iad, bha an t-iasg cho pàilt, cha ruigeadh tu leas bàta mór idir. Bha an t-uiste domhainn a-staigh dìreach gus a' chladaich. Tha an t-uiste 'dol mun cuairt a Cape North mar seo. Bha an t-àite, an t-uiste, cho domhainn, fìchead troighean no fìchead fathoms. Agus bha sin làn trosg, rionnach, sgadan, 's a h-uile seòrsa eisg, gheobh thu a' sin. Cha ruig thu leas ach bàta ràimh, bàta ràimh, cha ruig thu leas motor boat idir. Bàta ràimh. An trosg a gheobhadh iad gan sailleadh. Agus gam fàgail ann am piogallach cuideachd. Leth bharaille a bha sin. Lionadh de shallainn, trosg, dheanadh iad suas iad gu math. Agus rionnach cuideachd, rionnach saillte, trosg 's a h-uile seosa iasg ann. Thigeadh an uair sin bàta à Halifax, thigeadh bàta às England, làn de provisions, bhiodh dhuinn, a dh'itheadh iad. A

h-uile seòrsa biodh a bha dhìth ort. Flùr, tì, agus mùn-choirce, agus aodach aca cuideach. Dheanadh iad trade. Trade airson iasg airson provisions a dh'itheadh iad. Lìonadh e suas an taigh airson a' gheamhradh. Bhiodh a h-uile sìon aca. (Fraser 2010)

They hoisted the sails on the boat in Mabou. A beautiful day. And they had a dog, an axe and saw, some clothing, and they took off down to Cape North. They went down to the Lowlands, in Cape North. Were you ever in the Lowlands?

There were four or five houses there in the Lowlands. There is a big mountain on this side, between the Lowlands and Cheticamp, a terribly big mountain, they themselves were just on this end. And there was another mountain in the rear, like this, in behind, and there was a nice piece of land there, right at this flat, there were four or five houses there, there was a school house, and they had animals, they would have a ox, and they had cows for milking, they would have horses, and they would have snow every winter, snow.

Their livelihood, in Cape North, then, the fish were so plentiful, you needn't bother with a big boat at all. The water was deep right into the shore. The water goes around Cape North like that. The area, the water was so deep, twenty feet, or twenty fathoms. And it was full of codfish, mackerel, herring, every sort of fish, you'll get it there. You only required a row boat, a row boat, you didn't need a motor boat at all. A row boat. The codfish they got were salted. And left in containers too. Half barrels like that. They would fill them with salt, codfish, they would do them up well. And mackerel too, salted mackerel, codfish, and every type of fish. Then a boat would come from Halifax, a boat would come from England, full of provisions, food for them, they would eat. Every sort of food they wanted. Flour, tea, oats, and they had clothing too. They would make a trade. Trade fish for provisions they would eat. They would fill up the house for the winter. They would have everything.

Highland immigrants had arrived in the region as strangers, knowing little about its landscape or environment, and possessing few of the skills necessary to master them. Narratives suggest, however, that with time they came to feel at home in Nova Scotia, becoming comfortable and confident even in its most remote stretches. To be sure, this change was more profound than learning to wield an axe. As they formed personal and social connections to the land they settled, Highlanders began to see their surroundings in a different way. What was once a foreign landscape to them—unknown and intimidating—came to be filled with personal, social, and cultural meaning. In the next chapter, I explore the role place names played in this

process, asking what they reveal about how settlers and their descendants interpreted their surroundings and instilled them with a sense of Gaelic identity.

Chapter Six

Gaelic Place Names in Nova Scotia

Wherever people have been a sustained presence in the landscape, known its natural resources and physical characteristics, and used and molded it for their purposes, place names are found. Though largely unofficial and frequently overlooked, Gaelic place names provide evidence of the way immigrants and their descendants saw their surroundings in Nova Scotia, laying claim to its natural and built landscape and solidifying their sense of belonging in a foreign environment. But the places they settled were never empty. The region had a long history of settlement and well-established place name tradition prior to their arrival. Mi'kmaq had been resident since time immemorial and knew the landscape as well as anyone could. French explorers, settlers and soldiers joined them and added to an established place name lexicon. With time, the British assumed control of Nova Scotia. On their behalf, Samuel Holland completed a survey of Cape Breton in 1767. In doing so, he renamed much of the island yet again. Some of these names withstood the test of time, but many others were soon forgotten. Peter MacKenzie Campbell, who was raised in a Gaelic speaking home, suggests a reason:

The great flow of Highland immigrants to the island took place after the survey was made, but were given no knowledge of such names, and hence, casually used terms of their own which usage has, since that time, made permanent. Very few of the settlers could speak English—only Gaelic—and they simply used descriptive terms in their own language to designate their new areas of abode, or borrowed names from their former Highland homes. (Campbell 1978, 14)

Growing up in the early years of the twentieth century, Campbell probably knew Gaelic place names, but few of them were likely found on maps. For a variety of reasons including the historic social, institutional and political marginalization of Gaelic language and culture, Gaelic place names were rarely made official in Nova Scotia. This hardly means they were non-existent. Like people the world over, Gaels named and renamed aspects of the natural and built

environment that surrounded them. In fact, place names form a rich and important component of the oral tradition in Gaelic Scotland, as Michael Newton points out:

The density of Gaelic place names on the landscape and the intimate knowledge most Gaels had of the landscape has been frequently noted by scholars wherever Gaelic was spoken, from Loch Lomond to Lewis. Every discernible feature – each stone, clump of trees, pool, bend in the stream, notch in a ridge, and so on – this allowed for the names of many people and events to be attached to the natural features of the landscape. (Newton 2009, 296-297)

My own awareness of this tradition was sparked by childhood visits to the farm where my grandmother was raised in central Cape Breton. Below the field, in a place where the road dips and turns, is a spot called *Sloc nam Bòcain* (Hollow of the Spook). To be sure, this has long been an important landmark for friends and neighbours in Benacadie Glen: so much so that even a young visitor like me came to know and use its name. But it also represented a hidden view of the world, one only recognized and recalled by those with inside knowledge. No sign marked its presence, and no print source recorded its position. As far as official records are concerned, it did not exist.

While maps seem to embody an objective description of the landscape, in reality they represent the world very selectively (Johnson 2007, 85). What they include—and especially what maps exclude—reveals a great deal about who wields power. In both Ireland and Scotland, ordinance surveys were produced in an attempt to subjugate and discredit native knowledge and control of the landscape. Throughout North America, settlers routinely ignored indigenous toponyms, choosing instead to name the places they found anew. In many ways, this process echoed the displacement of First Nations themselves.

Likewise, though the majority of residents in eastern Nova Scotia and Cape Breton Island once spoke only Gaelic, maps of their communities never reflected this reality. Instead, English

maps, in which occasional Mi'kmaq, French and Gaelic toponyms were included, reinforced the hegemonic control wielded by the Anglophone establishment. In this way, fieldwork that aims to recover local place names helps in what John Murray calls “a semantic reclamantion of a lost domain” (2014, 3).

For the toponymist, place names can be organized in several ways. Transfer names recall former homes across the sea; examples are common enough across Canada. But new names were also coined in Gaelic. Some are descriptive, relating the physical characteristics of the area. Others are possessive, naming owners or former residents of the site. Associative names reflect attributes related to the site, natural resources for instance, while incident names recall events that occurred at the site. These are valuable divisions, but so too are categories of names based on the physical and psychic environment community residents inhabit everyday: the bridges, brooks, occupations and interests that form their realities. W. F. H. Nicolaisen highlights the importance of minor place names like these when he writes that, “Every one of these speaks of the ways and means by which man attempted to master the surrounding world through the medium of language” (Nicolaisen 1961, 82).

Because of the ways place names reflect and affect the way people see the world, they are important tools for understanding the people and communities that create them. Toponyms, after all, owe their existence to both individual and collective decisions. An individual might name a place, but that name wields little power until others adopt it. Moreover, what people choose to name and the names they choose, are revealing. In British Columbia, for instance, Tlingit name all the bays they use to fish and boat, but not the mountains that overlook them (Creswell 2013, 9). Likewise, the names gold miners gave tributaries of the Klondike, the Eldorado and Bonanza, show an interest in gold, not caribou or salmon (Morse 2003, 113). Given this significance,

folklorists and anthropologists have long recognized the importance of place names. Keith Basso, who conducted extensive ethnographic work with Western Apache in Arizona, describes their significance in the following:

...place-names are arguably among the most highly charged and richly evocative of all linguistic symbols. Because of their inseparable connection to specific locations, place-names may be used to summon forth an enormous range of mental and emotional associations – associations of time and space, of history and events, of persons and social activities, of oneself and stages in one's life. And in their capacity to evoke, in their compact power to muster and consolidate so much of what a landscape may be taken to represent in both personal and cultural terms, place-names acquire a functional value that easily matches their utility as instruments of reference. (Basso 1996, 77)

Over the last several years bilingual highway signs in English and Gaelic have been erected in many parts of Nova Scotia. To be sure, these signs are a welcome reminder of the linguistic profile of area settlers and demonstrate the growing confidence and political strength of the Gaelic community. But perhaps they also signal the weakened status of the language; no longer a threat to the linguistic hegemony of anglo establishment in Nova Scotia, Gaelic now receives a small measure of support from government. Whichever way we look at it, the erection of these signs is no trifling matter. As Simon Taylor reminds us, all place names are political (1998, 8).

At the same time, we should remember that not all the names they feature possess equal cultural and historical depth. English place names translated into Gaelic, or English toponyms rendered phonetically in Gaelic, reveal little about settlement patterns, traditional activities or the worldview of Gaels in Nova Scotia. Sociologist Daniel MacInnes cautions against relying on names like these to assert a linguistic identity in Nova Scotia, writing, "If one were trying to demonstrate the prior existence of a Gaelic heritage it would be a technical achievement but a

simple minded exercise to phonetically transcribe an English name by Gaelic spelling” (MacInnes 2010, 12).³

For a similar reason this chapter looks beyond major Scottish place names found in Nova Scotia. Toponyms such as Aberdeen, Glencoe, Glengarry, Inverness and Iona may suggest ties to Scotland, but they can tell us little about Gaelic language usage in Nova Scotia. As cultural, religious and industrial centers, names like these have long possessed meaning to people from a variety of linguistic backgrounds. More to the point, knowing that a Gaelic place name is available for a given community is not the same as knowing it was used.

Iona provides a good example. Its current name was suggested by a visiting bishop in 1873 and adopted by formal statute in 1891 (Brown 1922, 70). Though several Gaelic names are used for Iona in Scotland, none appears to have achieved popular currency in Nova Scotia. Instead, a previous name for the area, Sandraigh, persisted in local tradition. Widely recognized, but never made official, Sandraigh recalls the small island home from which a group of early settlers emigrated in the first years of the nineteenth century.

Interestingly, the earliest reference to the local use of this name appears to come from a land petition submitted to Lieutenant Governor Ainslie in 1820. Until that time, Cape Breton was a separate colony from the mainland and island settlers who applied for legal title to a piece of land there were allowed to name it. In this case, Christie McNeil, a widow with seven children, gave the name ‘Sandray’ to a piece of property in Benacadie Pond (McNeil 1820).

Numerous Old Country names are found on land petitions submitted by settlers in Cape Breton. These are transfer names, featuring imported toponyms. Some allude to large regions,

³ Examples of this pattern include Waterside, which is translated as *Oir Na Mara*, and Harbourview, rendered as *Sealladh A’ Chalaigh*. Neither example is traditional. Likewise, Lexington, Inverness County, is listed as *Leagsantan* and Goshen, Guysborough County, is called *Goisein*. Phonetic spelling aside, neither name is Gaelic.

such as Kintail, Argyle and Caithness, but many others recall smaller communities, like Sandraigh, from which settlers emigrated. In naming a new land, settlers often chose to commemorate an old home. As a result, toponyms can provide modern researchers with important clues about the geographic origins of certain families.

At the same time, not all settlers came directly from Scotland. In Big Pond, for instance, Ronald McDonald petitioned for a piece of land he called Scotch Fort (McDonald 1819). A former resident of Prince Edward Island, McDonald likely left the island because of its restrictive land tenure policies. Instead of commemorating a homeland across the Atlantic, this property likely recalls a former home at Scotch Fort, Prince Edward Island.

Importantly, toponyms found on land petitions also indicate the development of a new, descriptive place name lexicon in Gaelic Cape Breton. Though many examples possess idiosyncratic spelling that obscure their meaning—suggesting either a government agent’s unfamiliarity with Gaelic or the illiteracy of the petitioners—others are more easily understood. Donald McKinnon, for example, a settler in Broad Cove, named his property Talavard (*An Talamh Àrd*—High Ground). A neighbour, Angus McLellan, requested that his land be called Bal Ellan (*Baile Ailein*—Allan’s Farm). Though they refer to private property, these and other names found on land petitions were formally adopted by government and can be considered among the first official Gaelic place names coined in Nova Scotia.

With time, larger areas were also named by settlers. While most examples were confined to the oral tradition, some toponyms found their way onto maps and were eventually adopted by government. By the mid-nineteenth century, for instance, transfer names such as Arisaig, Lochaber, Loch Eil and Glenelg, appeared on maps of the mainland. In Cape Breton, Loch Lomond, Lake Uist and Boisdale also found their way onto maps during this period. Toponyms

like these are widespread across the region, in fact, according to William Hamilton, “The Scottish immigrants, whether because of homesickness, innate clannishness, or a sense of history, were more prone than any other group to impose names reminiscent of their homeland” (1996, 27). If the following observer in *Mosgladh* is typical, such names reinforced a sense of Gaelic identity and belonging in Nova Scotia:

C’a a’m faigte aite bu fhreagarraichte air-son cruinneachadh Ghaidheal no anns na parraistean anns am faighean cearnan ris an canar Arasaig, Muideart, Cnoideart, Dun mac Ghlas, Sgurr Eige, Ard Nise, Lios Mor? (MacDhomhnuill 1931, 1)

Where would a more appropriate place be found for a gathering of Gaels than in the parishes where one finds places called Arisaig, Moirdart, Knoydart, Dunmaglas, Eigg Mountain, Ardness and Lismore?

For our purposes however, new toponyms, created in the province and based in the local experience, are more instructive. Not only do they foster a sense of belonging in a new country—reflecting the worldview and language of local residents—locally coined names also reveal ways in which settlers perceived and utilized the land and confirm the on-going use of Gaelic in Nova Scotia. On a map of the Bras d’Or Lakes produced in 1847, for example, we find Lochan Fad (*Lochan Fada*—Little Long Lake) and Cape Rhumore (*An Rubha Mòr*—Big Cape) near Middle Cape and Dhu Point (*An Rubha Dubh*—Black Cape) not far from Eskasoni (Bayfield 1847). Descriptive as opposed to commemorative, these names underscore the important role lake navigation played in the lives of Gaelic-speaking settlers to Cape Breton.

During the second part of the nineteenth century, as more detailed maps were created and elements of the place name corpus stabilized, additional toponyms were committed to print. One of the earliest examples found on the mainland is Glen Dhu (*An Gleann Dubh*). Located in Pictou County, several kilometers from the Gulf Shore, this name appears on a map produced by

Andrew and William MacKinlay in 1862. Other examples would soon follow, including those below:

Name on Map:	Modern Gaelic:	Translation:	County:
Lochan Dhu	<i>An Lochan Dubh</i>	Little dark lake	Cape Breton
Sgurra Bhreac	<i>Sgurra Bhreac</i>	Speckled Peak	Cape Breton
Beinn Scalpie	<i>Beinn Scalpaigh</i>	Sgalpay Mountain	Victoria
Ben Eoin	<i>Beinn Eòin</i>	Jonathan's Mountain	Cape Breton
Glenmore	<i>An Gleann Mòr</i>	Big Glen	Inverness

Interestingly, a number of Gaelic place names are connected to waterways in a remote corner of the Cape Breton Highlands. Besides being good examples of compound toponyms, or place-names that combine two or more languages, Coinneach Brook (Kenneth's Brook) Calum Ruadh Brook (Red Malcolm's Brook) (Fletcher 1884, Sheet no. 8.), Fionnar Brook (Chilly Brook) and Bothan Brook (Cottage Brook) (Fletcher 1884, Sheet no. 11.) are indicative of the extent to which Gaels were familiar with the backlands of Cape Breton by the late nineteenth century. Richard MacGregor Dawson points out these names also suggest a disinclination to use Gaelic for anything more than the proper name (Dawson 1960, 11).

Importantly, maps have also preserved toponyms in regions of the province where Gaelic is no longer spoken. In Earltown, Colchester County, for example, the language is a distant memory. But residents still travel on a road called Berichan (*Biorachan*). While this appears to be an Old Country name imported by early settlers, it may equally describe the steep terrain of the local setting. At the opposite extreme of the Gaelic speaking region in Nova Scotia, close to the village of Meat Cove, we find Rhu Pilinn (*Rubha Pillein*). According to information provided to the Geographic Names Board of Canada, the name means Saddle Cape. Approaching the point from the water, one can easily see why. The steep front of the point has slopes on either

side resembling a saddle. Names like these remind us that area settlers and their descendants came to know the local terrain through Gaelic.

Of course, inclusion on a map does not ensure official recognition; nor does official recognition ensure permanence. On a map created by Hugh Fletcher in 1884 for the Geological Survey of Canada, for instance, Ben Breac (*A' Bheinn Bhreac*—Speckled Mountain) is found several kilometers southwest of Goose Cove (Fletcher 1884, Sheet no. 12). Today however, no sign marks its location and modern maps omit it. A similar fate appears to have befallen a place name in Antigonish County. On a map produced by A. F. Church in 1864, Cabar Feigh (*Cabar Fèidh*—Deer's Horns) is located near Fraser's Grant (Church 1864). Calling to mind a popular tune of the same title—and long connected with clan MacKenzie—the name appears to have passed into obsolescence years ago.

In reality however, place names need not be official to remain vital. Many names are preserved through the oral tradition. New Harris, for instance, was originally called *Slios a' Bhrochain* (Gruel Side). The name recalls the lean days of the pioneering era. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, a new generation came of age, found it pejorative, and had it changed. Its name now calls to mind the island home from which its settlers arrived. Within the oral tradition, however, people still refer to the area as the *Slios* even in English (MacDonald 2014). This usage represents a sort of counter-cartography: names retained in use despite their official displacement and replacement.

By the time the *Hector* sailed into Pictou Harbour in 1773, land speculators had already claimed much of the forested land passengers could see along its eastern shores. As a result, settlers quickly spread out in all directions. More than a hundred years later, Rev. D. B. Blair and Rev. A. MacLean Sinclair contributed a short account of settlement to a book written by Dr.

William MacKay (1914, 570-571). In their description, they include some of the Gaelic place names settlers gave Pictou County including *A' Bheinn Ghorm* (The Blue Mountain) *Baile an Fhuarain* (Springville) and *An Abhainn Mhòr* (The Big River).

Given the unofficial nature of the local toponymic tradition in general, community histories like this are important sources of such names today. In probing and recording aspects of the oral tradition, they often preserve information overlooked in sources with a broader scope. Additional names from the area surface in other publications; towards the upper stretches of the East River, for instance, a large section of intervale land was claimed by disbanded soldiers and called Strathsbeg (*Strath Beag*—Little River Valley) (Bridgeville Women's Institute 1967, 3). The area was called Soldier's Grant in English. Removed from the shore by several kilometers, Roger's Hill was known as *Beinn nam Mathanach* (Matheson's Mountain) in Gaelic. Perhaps as a compromise between English and Gaelic, the name was changed to Scotsburn in 1867 (J. Cameron 1972, 281).

In reconstructing elements of the place name corpus created by settlers and their descendants, Gaelic language periodicals published during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are also helpful. Given their inclusion of songs, stories, letters, articles and editorials, they preserve a wide variety of place names in Gaelic. Toponyms from the mainland, where language erosion occurred first, are particularly valuable since they preserve evidence of a regional tradition that has virtually disappeared today. In addition to transfer names from Scotland, mainland toponyms referenced in *MacTalla* and *Mosgladh* include the following:

Gaelic Name:	Location:	County:
<i>Loch an Fhuamhaire</i>	Giant's Lake	Guysborough County
<i>Eilean Phictou</i>	Pictou Island	Pictou County
<i>Abhainn Bharnaidh</i>	Barney's River	Pictou County
<i>Gàradh Eden</i>	Garden of Eden	Pictou County
<i>Allt a' Bhailidh</i>	Bailey's Brook	Pictou County

<i>Am Baile Reultagach</i>	Stellerton	Pictou County
<i>A' Bheinn Ghorm</i>	Blue Mountain	Pictou County
<i>Leitir-Ghreine</i>	Sunny Brae	Pictou County
<i>Braighe na h-Aibhne n-Ear</i>	East River	Pictou County
<i>Abhainn Eoin</i>	River John	Pictou County
<i>Baile an Fhraoich</i>	Heatherton	Antigonish County
<i>Allt an Dotair</i>	Doctor's Brook	Antigonish County
<i>Allt Mhic Ara</i>	McAra's Brook	Antigonish County

Though some of the above examples are likely translations from English, many smaller locales named in local publications are undoubtedly grounded in local usage. For example, *Loch an Airidh* (Pasture Lake) is situated near Grand River (*MacTalla* Sep. 9, 1893, 1). Between Louisbourg and Main à Dieu, a road is named *Rathad a' Chlèirich* (The Cleric's Road) (*MacTalla* Jun. 29, 1895, 5). On the other side of the island, around Margaree, *Beinn na Guiseid* (Gusset Mountain) is found (*MacTalla* Jul. 15, 1893, 7). Written records like these are also important reminders of the large number of Gaels who lived and worked in burgeoning industrial centers at the turn of the twentieth century. The following examples, which retain their original orthography, come from *MacTalla*:

Gaelic Name:	Translation:	Location:
<i>A' Mheinn a Tuatha</i>	The North Mine	Sydney Mines
<i>A' Mhèinn Choper</i>	The Copper Mine	Near Coxheath
<i>Meinn Ghual Mhabu</i>	Mabou Coal Mines	Mabou Coal Mines
<i>A' Mheinn Ùire</i>	The New Mine	Reserve

Despite their obvious importance, these and other print sources are not immune to faults. Behind each toponym printed we find an author and editor deeply committed to preserving and promoting the Gaelic language. Consequently we are not always sure whether the place names featured in these publications reflect widespread community usage or individual translations. A closer look at *MacTalla* helps illustrate this point.

Published between 1892 and 1904, the groundbreaking periodical was edited by Jonathan G. MacKinnon. Toponyms are included not only in articles and letters to the editor in the paper, but also in a regular section listing the names and communities of paying subscribers. Despite his dedication to publishing completely in Gaelic, a commitment that extended to all featured advertisements, MacKinnon regularly used English place names in *MacTalla*. The following passage is a good example:

*Chaidh duin òg a mhuinntir **New Harris**, fear Aonghas MacLeoid, a bhàthadh ann an **St. Ann's**, Di-haoine air an t-seachainn 's chaidh. Bha e feuchainn ri dhol thairis air an deigh eadar **South Gut** agus Rudha 'n Rothaich. (Jan. 12, 1895, 5)*

A young man belonging to New Harris, one Angus MacLeod, was drowned in St. Ann's on Friday of last week. He was trying to go across the ice between South Gut and Monroe's Point.

We can speculate on the reasons for this linguistic lapse. Given the importance of the incident being described, for example, MacKinnon may have wanted to ensure readers from other areas recognized the names of the places mentioned. It also seems possible he was not familiar with the Gaelic toponyms local residents used for these places. In describing a ferry service to communities closer to his home, for instance, MacKinnon has no need to resort to English.

Tha i 'cur cuairt air an loch trì uairean 's an t-seachainn, 'fhad 'sa cheadaicheas an t-side, a' fagail Ceann a' Locha 'sa mhadainn, a' dol Amhainn nam Breac, a sin gu Bun na h-Aimhne, a sin dh'an Loch Bhan agus a sin a tilleadh gu Ceann a Locha, a taghal aig Ambhainn nam Breac. (Sep. 21 1895, 1)

She does a circuit of lake three times a week, as long as the weather cooperates, leaving **Ceann a Locha** in the morning, going to **Amhainn nam Breac**, then to **Bun na h-Aimhne**, then on to **Loch Ban** and then returning to **Ceann a Locha**, stopping at **Ambhainn nam Breac**

More troubling perhaps is the lack of consistency with regards to the toponyms he published. For instance, between letters to the editor and other sources, we find at least four

different names used for Little Narrows: *Na Caoil Bheaga*, *Caolas Chumhang*, *Caolas Bheaga* and *Na Narrows Bheaga*.⁴ Not far away, Grand Narrows is variously called *Na Caoil Mhora*, *Narrows Mhora* and *Caolas na Narrows Mhòr*. Perhaps because of this instability, names are frequently found only in English. Indeed, at least one reader took the paper to task for this propensity. John Munroe, who had followed Rev. Norman MacLeod to New Zealand, wrote to correct the paper in 1895, showing that local place names were important even to those who lived on the other side of the world:

Bha mi 'leughadh ann am paipearean Albannach mu'm faca mi Mac-Talla, cliù mor air a thoirt da air son a bhi cho glan, gun truailleadh sam bith le Beurla. Gabhaidh sibh mo leisgeal ma their mi, le dùrachd mhath, nach eil sibh a cumail ris a sin mar bu choir. Ann an paipear an 27mh la de mhios an Damhair (October), dh'ainmicheadh Kempt Head, an uair bu choir a chantainn ris "Ceanna Camp," aite agus ainm a b'aithne dhuinn gu math. Agus tha cuid de dh'ainmeannan eile air an cur sìos anns a phaipear se air an aon doigh. Bu choir dh'an luchd sgriobhadh a bhi faiceallach nach dean iad a leithid de mhearachd a rithist.

I was reading in Scottish papers before I saw Mac-Talla that it was getting great commendation for purity, without any contamination by English. You will excuse me if I say, with goodwill, that you are not adhering to that as you should. In the issue of 27th October Kempt Head was mentioned instead of the right name "Ceanna Camp," a place and name that we knew well. And there are some other names mentioned in the paper in the same way. The writers should be careful not to make a similar mistake again (Brett 2017, 9)

While this situation does not diminish the value of these publications as a whole—indeed it seems likely they helped stabilize some toponyms—it highlights the importance of working with a variety of sources, including modern tradition bearers, to develop a fuller picture of the historic state of Gaelic language place names in Nova Scotia. One source that bridges the gap between written and oral sources, the historic and modern, is song. Given the prominence of the song-making tradition in Gaelic Nova Scotia, we should not be surprised that place names are

⁴ Ironically, the Gaelic name currently used for this strait, and the ferry that crosses it, An Caolas Silis, does not seem to appear in *MacTalla*; though we are assured in Patterson's *History of Victoria County*, the area was once called the Straits of Sheila (Patterson 1978, 182).

regularly preserved in this form. Although the number of toponyms they include can be jarring to modern ears, their inclusion is highly traditional, as Michael Newton points out: "... the use of place names is a characteristic feature of traditional Gaelic literature which departs significantly from the convention of modern literary style" (2009, 292).

To be sure, these are not merely geographic coordinates. John MacInnes, a leading expert in the history, culture and language of Gaelic Scotland, reminds us there can also be formulaic element to the presence of toponyms in songs: "Gaelic place names are a constant presence throughout our song poetry, usually introduced by the formula *chì mi*: 'I see' and followed by lists which can become sonorous roll calls and litanies of names" (Mackay 2013, ix). A song by Alexander the Ridge MacDonald serves as a good example. Here the bard names seven communities, describes their attributes and reminisces about the people who reside there. In the following verse, for example, MacDonald depicts some of the characteristics of Creignish and Long Point:

*Chi mi Creignis nan craobh
Le cuid aonaichean ard;
'S an Rugh' Fada tha ri taobh
Gheibhte maoin ann 'us barr.*

I see Creignish of trees
With its pasturelands high;
And Long Point that is so near
And so rich in crops. (Fergusson 1977, 5)

Another song that makes good use of local toponyms comes from near North River, Cape Breton. In this case however, the bard restricts his vision to one valley; here, the scale is smaller and the focus intensified. Four mountains form the boundaries of his valley home: *Beinn a' Champa* (Camp Mountain), *Beinn a' Phana* (Pan Mountain), *Beinn nan Geàrrloch* (Gairlochers' Mountain) and *Beinn Fhionnlaidh* (Finlay's Mountain). Not far away the bard informs us, *Beinn*

a' Bharain (Barrains's Mountain) and *Beinn a' Chaimbeulaich* (Campbell's Mountain) are found (Thornhill 2006, 181). In this way, we see preserved in two stanzas, from one song, six place names that might have otherwise have been lost.

In many ways, the narrow, close focus of this song is probably more in keeping with the day to day reality of most Gaels in nineteenth and early twentieth century Nova Scotia. Travel was slow, difficult and infrequent. In addition, people were closely connected to their immediate surroundings through an agricultural and subsistence lifestyle. This situation fostered a detailed understanding of the local topography and environment. In describing the place name corpus of one community settled by Gaels in Cape Breton, the authors of its community history claim that, "These names suggest a people who knew their adopted homeland so well that they had a name for every stone and blade of grass" (Cumming *et al*, 23).

Murdoch Morrison was a bard who regularly drew on place names. His collected works showcase a variety of good examples, including *Traigh Bhàin* (White Beach), *Cnòc a' Bhàrrain* (Hill of the Barrens), *Còbh Mhòr* (Big Cove), *Allt na Fearna* (Alder Brook) and *Sgeir nan Ròn* (Seal Rock) (Morrison 1931). Because the verse is highly localized, largely relating to people and events directly within his community, we can be reasonably certain the majority of these names refer to topographical features along the east coast of Cape Breton. But where were they located exactly?

At one point the place names Morrison included in his songs would have resonated with hundreds of local residents; indeed, that was likely part of their appeal. But this was an area that was especially hard-hit by outmigration. Songs people learned here as children, they sang as adults in Boston. Today, the communities he described are much reduced in population and, critically, few people there speak Gaelic.

Over the past century, there has been a drastic decline in the number of Gaelic speakers in Nova Scotia. As a result, the majority of these place names, particularly those maintained through oral tradition, have been made inaccessible to a new generation fluent only in English. Michael Newton alludes to the social repercussions of this loss when he writes about the bond between people and place in Scotland: “As the Gaelic sense of place is one in which communal history is embedded in the place names attached to landscape features, it depends to a great degree upon understanding the language in which the place names were coined” (2009, 301).

When toponyms are translated, as they have been on occasion for official purposes, their ability to speak to the presence of Gaels, their history and language, is muted and suppressed. For tradition bearers like Allan MacLeod, the loss is keenly felt. Reflecting on a place he always knew as *Cnòc an Diabhail* (Devil’s Hill), MacLeod simply says, “*Anisd, chur iad Devil’s Hill air ann am Beurla. Mhill iad e.* (Now, they call it Devil’s Hill in English. They ruined it) (MacLeod 2014).

In conducting fieldwork with local tradition bearers, toponyms regularly surface as part of the ebb and flow of conversation. As a result, their inclusion in the historical record is sometimes unintentional, being peripheral to the initial research goals of the fieldworker. But this also means they are preserved out of context: without a link to their geographic location. As much as possible, my research has been more focused, using windshield tours and memory maps to encourage toponyms to surface while connecting them to specific parts of the natural and built environment. The results suggest that even at this late date the oral tradition remains the richest source of Gaelic place names in Nova Scotia.

Consulting with local residents also ensures our understanding of the place name lexicon reflects historic usage. Translations are not always adequate in that regard. Consider, for

instance, Loch Lomond. Its actual name is *Loch Laomainn* in Gaelic, but local residents often called it *An Leàg Mòr* (The Big Lake) according to Kenny Morrison, who grew up in a Gaelic speaking home there. In a similar way, Glenville was referred to as *An Gleann Dubh* (The Dark Glen) and Glendale was known as *Braigh na h-Aibhneadh* (Braes of the River). While these toponyms are recalled by a diminishing number of residents today, the original name for the town of Inverness, *An Sìthean* (The Fairy Mound) remains in regular use: the only grocery store in town is called the Shean Co-op.

Some scholars have gone so far as to suggest places cannot exist until they are named. Whether or not we agree, place names are certainly as capable of shaping human conceptions of place as stories. Consider, for instance, the imaginative quality of a place name from Glendale, Inverness County. According to Jeff MacDonald, the large, rectangular mound is known as *Uaigh an Fhamhair* (The Giant's Grave). That anyone ever believed it was the resting place of a giant is unlikely, but knowing the name undoubtedly affected how people saw the area. In my case, knowing the hollow below the old family farm was called *Sloc nam Bòcain* (Hollow of the Spook) certainly molded my childhood understanding of the place and helped set it apart.

Names like these possess a historical depth that translations lack and reveal how immigrants and their descendants saw the local landscape. The last example, for instance, demonstrates how natural topographical features could be interpreted within a supernatural framework. Not surprisingly, many names focus on the physical characteristics of the landscape settlers and their descendants encountered. Two waterfalls located in the Cape Breton Highlands National Park serve as good examples. Located in Big Intervale, Beulach Ban Falls (*Bealach Bàn*—Little White Mouth Falls) attracts hundreds of visitors each year. Near Baddeck, Easach Ban (Fair Waterfall) is the official name for a waterfall commonly called Uisge Ban Falls (White

Water). Even in areas where language shift happened generations ago, toponyms can still be recalled in Gaelic. In Earltown, for example, Donald Sutherland told me about a place called *Cnòc na Gaoithe* (Windy Hill) (Sutherland 2014). Other examples come from around the region:

<i>A' Bheinn Mhaol</i>	Bald Mountain	St. Anne's
<i>Am Bìte Bàn</i>	The White Beach	North River
<i>An Còmhnard</i>	The Flat	Shenacadie
<i>Gob a' Rubha</i>	Tip of the Point	Benacadie Pond
<i>An Rubha Dubh</i>	The Dark Point	North Side East Bay
<i>Am Maise Rapach</i>	The Rough Marsh	River Denys
<i>An Cnoc Ruadh</i>	The Red Hill	Barra Glen
<i>An Lochan Dubh</i>	Little dark lake	Mapleridge
<i>An Cnoc Biorach</i>	The Sharp Hill	Arasaig

At times, the sheer volume of names associated with geographically small areas is impressive. Toponyms suggest residents laid claim to the totality of their environment, not only to those parts they occupied. The expansive distribution of toponyms also reminds us that many areas of the interior were more densely settled a century ago than today and much land has since reverted to forest. Most names are connected to minor features of the landscape and reflect the intimate, personal connections immigrants and their descendants formed with their surroundings. Anthony Giddens refers to this kind of space as 'embedded' in that local knowledge and connections dominate (Giddens 1990). Employed for generations, but relevant only within a limited geographic area, such names are common but rarely official. Consider, for instance, the following map of Rear Benacadie Glen, an area several kilometers wide, compiled with the help of various tradition bearers from the area:



(6.1: Map of Benacadie Glen compiled with the assistance of local residents)

As this map indicates, place names often relate to human possession of the natural and built landscape. Inspirational names, which praise the land, or show hope for its future, are notably scarce. Settlers evidently preferred pragmatic place names, suggesting ownership and descriptive attributes. Even bridges, which were public crossings and not owned privately, frequently carried the name of a nearby resident or property owner. As Cathie MacKinnon puts it: *Tha mi a' creidsinn gu robh na drochaidean, gu robh iad air ainmeachadh as deoghaidh gu b' e cò leis an t-àite* (I believe that the bridges, that they were named after whoever owned the place) (MacKinnon 2009).

Given the critical role land ownership played in the settlement of the region, we should hardly be surprised. In some ways the process of naming land was as vital to claiming it as

clearing the forest and cultivating the soil. Naming a place, after all, is a clear and effective way of claiming it. Indeed, the relative paucity of Mi'kmaq toponyms adopted by early settlers may be attributed, at least partly, to this motivation. Keith Basso argues that scholars have too often overlooked this motivation in their work:

... the common activity of placenaming—the actual use of toponyms in concrete instances of everyday speech—has attracted little attention from linguists or ethnographers. Less often still has placenaming been investigated as a universal means—and, it could well turn out, a universally primary means—for appropriating physical environments. (Basso 1996, 76)

At the same time, the positive social and cultural repercussions of possessive toponyms are worth remembering, including how they strengthen a sense of belonging in residents and how they help preserve community memories, as Matthew Johnson writes: “The agency involved in the act of naming is most obvious when personal names are used, thus turning a locale in the landscape into a piece of social memory...” (2007, 148). Fieldwork reveals no shortage of names associated with former residents including the following:

<i>Rubha Fhionnlaigh</i>	Finlay's Point	Mabou Coal Mines
<i>Beinn Iain Mhòir</i>	Big John's Mountain	Mabou Coal Mines
<i>Clìoraidhean an Tuathanich</i>	The Farmer's Clearing	Rear Big Pond
<i>Pàirc Màiri Eoghainn</i>	Mary Hughie's Field	Rear Big Pond
<i>Eas Shionnaidh Shionnaidh</i>	Johnnie Johnnie's Waterfall	Rear Big Pond
<i>Rudha Bheinsidh</i>	Benjie's Point	Loch Lomond
<i>Druim Chrìostaidh</i>	Christy's Ridge	East Lake Ainslie
<i>Rubha nan Innseanach</i>	Native Point	Judique
<i>Drochaid Seònaid</i>	Janet's Bridge	Sterling
<i>Drochaid nan Ceanadach</i>	The Kennedys' Bridge	Broad Cove Banks

Through place names like these, genealogy and ancestry were inscribed on the land, strengthening conceptual links between people and place. My previous research has shown how place names can provide important insights into settlement patterns and family connections (2013, 211-212). But we should also remember this tradition helped keep that knowledge

normalized at the community level. No doubt this also reinforced a sense of belonging in local residents whose ancestors were commemorated in the local landscape. For those who know and use them, toponyms provide verbal reminders of people no longer part of the modern world. Even after people died, and land was subdivided, place names act as psychic landmarks that link people and place in this community, accommodating what Seumas Heaney has called a “genealogical imagination” (Quoted by Nì Dhomhnaill 1996, 421).

Since immigration and settlement tended to occur in family and community groups, local communities were often characterized by cultural and religious homogeneity. Exceptions to this rule are sometimes brought to light in place names. Consider for instance, *Rathad an t-Sleitich* (Slateman’s Road) in Glendale (MacDonald 1992, 52). It commemorates a native of Sleat, Skye who settled in an area populated by Catholics connected to Arisaig, Moidart and Lochabar. In a similar vein, we find *Allt an t-Sasannaich* (The Englishman’s Brook). Given the ubiquity of Scottish Gaels in the community, this was once as specific as required to identify an Englishman in Judique.

While this material shows that land was named after local residents, the reverse is also true: people were named after land. Time and time again we find examples of men and women whose names—key to their sense of self and identity—were predicated on place. In fact, research into the nicknaming patterns of coal miners in Cape Breton—largely derived from rural regions like these—found that place-based nicknames were the most common kind used in the nineteenth century (Davey and MacKinnon 2001, 73).

Examples are not hard to find. The mainland was home to men named *Aonghas an Uillt Mhòir* (Angus of the Big Brook) and *Iain Bàn na Coille* (Fair John of the Forest) (Cameron 1999, 18 & 180). In Cape Breton, *Sine an Uillt* (Jane the Brook) lived in Washabuck, *Ruaridh*

Gleann Mòr (Big Glen Rory) came from Iona (MacLean 1939, 3 & 128) and *Dòmhnall an t-Sluic* (Donald the Hollow) resided in Hillsdale (MacDonell 2014).

What effect did names like these have on people? Did they inculcate a symbiotic sense of self and sense of place? Whatever the answer, monikers like these surely represent an important way in which place names grounded people in place and provided them with a sense of identity in Gaelic Nova Scotia. They also highlight the localized sense of community that existed since each example is best understood within a group that shared local referents. After all, to know what glen, what brook, and what hollow they imply requires specialized knowledge.

While a wide range of terminology is employed to define topographical features, place names encountered through this research show little terminological specificity when it comes to defining plants and trees. In all likelihood, the majority of settlers had no previous experience with many of the species they encountered and no specialized terms associated with them in Gaelic. And yet, this inexperience may have had the opposite effect when it came to some wildlife.

Assuming the number of songs composed about them is some indication, for example, bears held a certain fascination for Scottish Gaels. Most settlers had never seen one before—they had been hunted to extinction centuries earlier in Scotland—but bears are a recurring theme in both songs and place names in Gaelic Nova Scotia. Twin Rock Valley provides a good example. It was originally called *Gleann a' Mhathain* (Glen of the Bear) in Gaelic. According to local tradition, the name was unpopular with some valley residents who thought it painted an unrealistically wild picture of the place (Fraser 2015). My research revealed several additional examples, including the following:

Gaelic Name:	Translation:	Location:
<i>Allt a' Mhathain</i>	Brook of the Bear	Hillsdale
<i>Sloc a' Mhathain</i>	Hollow of the Bear	Rear Big Pond
<i>Trap a' Mhathain</i>	The Bear Trap	Near Hillsborough
<i>Craobh a' Mhathain</i>	The Bear Tree	Mabou Coal Mines

These examples show how place names can provide insight into what settlers and their descendants considered noteworthy or important in their environment. Naturally enough, a good source of water was a key consideration for settlers selecting property in the region. Roadside wells and springs also became important landmarks to generations of people travelling by horseback or walking home from church. Over and over again in this research, tradition bearers described the quality of their water, often remarking on its coolness, clearness, and fine taste.

Michael Jack MacNeil provides a typical description:

Cha mhòr a h-uile taigh, bha fuaran aca. An àm an t-samhraidh, bhiodh na fuarain sin, bhiodh iad cho fuar. Cha b'urrain dhut do chorrach a cumail ann da leis cho fuar 's a bha iad. 'S àm a' gheamraidh, bhiodh na fuarain, bhiodh vapor a' tighinn às, ceò a' tighinn às, leis cho blàtha 's a bha iad. (MacNeil 2014)

Almost every house, they had a spring. In the summertime, those springs would be so cold. You couldn't keep your finger in them with how cold they were. And in the winter, the springs would be, vapor would be coming out, fog coming out with how warm they were.

Although water sources like these have lost much of their social significance—few people are likely to stop and drink from them today—tradition bearers still recall the names of various springs and wells in the area because of their former importance. Written sources preserve names such as *Fuaran an Tuathaich* (The North Uist Man's Spring) in Washabuck (MacLean 1939, 69) and *Tobar nam Bòcan* (The Well of the Ghosts) in Pictou County (Nilsen 1989-90, 221). Oral tradition recalls additional examples:

<i>Fuaran Iain Alasdair</i>	John Alex's Spring	New Boston
<i>Fuaran Cèit Sheonaid</i>	Kate Janet's Spring	New Boston

<i>Tobar Anndra</i>	Andrew's Well	Rear Boisdale
<i>Tobar Pheadair Bhig</i>	Little Peter's Well	Rear Boisdale
<i>Am Fuaran Gorm</i>	The Blue Spring	Hillsdale
<i>Fuaran Bean Eachainn Dhòmhnaill Ruairidh</i>	Hector Donald Rory's Wife's Spring	Rear Christmas Island

In much the same way, oral history and community memories often emerge through toponyms. Recalling childhood walks to school in North River, Murdoch J. MacLennan told me about a place called *Coille Loisgte* (The Burnt Forest). In turn, this led to a discussion about the way in which pioneers cleared the land by burning it. As MacLennan makes clear, the name associated with it persisted long after the practice was stopped:

I heard them speak lots of time on *Coille Loisgte*. You know, like burnt ground. Cause even—we took a shortcut from school from a way up on the top of the hill across the farms and down through woods. And the woods was called *Coille Loisgte*. Because it was a hundred years before that—it was *coille loisgte* for farmers. (MacLennan 2007)

Julie Cruikshank depicts a similar situation in the Yukon, where naming places had the mnemonic effect of recalling what had once occurred there for a First Nations elder: “As we continued mapping, she attached specific stories, songs, and events to features of the landscape” (1990, 22). But whether names prompt memories or memories prompt names, the point remains the same: residents have instilled their surroundings with meaning in ways that resonate both culturally and linguistically.

Even a nondescript brook can be given an identity that recalls a former significance. When we spoke several years ago, Catherine MacKenzie told me about *Allt nighe nan Casan* (Footwashing Brook). Located near the church in Arasaig, the small waterway was so named because parishioners, wanting to spare their shoes, walked to church barefoot, with polished footwear in hand. At the brook they washed their feet before putting on their shoes and going to

Mass (MacKenzie 2014). A simple place name thus conveys the poverty and piety of generations of local residents.

A similar story is told along the Bras d'Or Lakes. In this case however, local residents shared a single pair of shoes, available to anyone concerned about being seen without such footwear in town, which were stored at *Creag nam Bròg* (The Rock of the Shoes). Joe Lawrence MacDonald relates the details:

Na daoine a bha a' fuireach anns a' Bharraschois agus ann am Baghasdal 'on toiseach an t-saoghail, cha robh ach aon stòr air a' Bhàr. 'Se sin Sudnaidh a' Tuatha. Àite Yamel. Agus bhiodh iad a' coiseach a dh'ionnsaigh a' Bhàir a cheannach ghnòthaichean a bhiodh a dhìth orra mu'n taigh; tì is sùcair is gnòthaichean mar sin. Agus bha aon creag mhòr ann agus an t-àinm a bh'aca air a' chreig a bha sìod 's e Creag nam Bròg. Choiseachadh iad air an casan ruisgte a dh'ionnsaigh na creiga agus chuireadh iad na brògan orra, agus choiseachadh iad dhan bhaile. Agus nuair a bhiodh iad a' tighinn dhachaidh, stadadh iad aig Creag nam Bròg agus leigeadh iad na brògan dhiubh agus choiseachadh iad air an casan ruisgte dhachaidh.

The people who were living in Barrachois and in Boisdale, long ago, there was only one store at the Bar. That's North Sydney. Yamel's Place. And they would be walking to North Sydney to purchase things that they needed around the house; tea and sugar and things like that. And there was one big rock there and the name they had for this rock, it was Rock of the Shoes. They would walk barefoot to the rock and they would put the shoes on, and they would walk to town. And when they would be coming home, they would stop at Rock of the Shoes and take the shoes off and they would walk home barefoot. (MacDonald, N.d.)

Like songs, stories have the ability to extend the physical and temporal reach of toponyms, transporting them to other places and conserving them long after their relevance as geographic referents is over. Barbara Johnstone highlights their importance to our sense of belonging when she writes that, "a person is at home in a place when that place evokes stories and, conversely, stories can serve to create places" (1990: 5). Because of their ability to be charged with social, cultural and personal significance, scholars have noted how toponyms allow insiders to speak in a kind of code, with names assuming the meaning of the stories connected to them. For the Western Apache, for instance, mentioning a place name is tantamount to telling the

story behind it (Basso 1996). Lori Vitale Cox also noted the widespread and instructive nature of place names in northern Cape Breton:

In the Bay district, every mountain, every marsh, every rock of any size or tree of any character had a Gaelic name and an attached story that the people in the community knew. Children learned to fish and to navigate by the stories associated with distinctive rocks or certain features of the land that they used to establish their position. Some of these have been translated into English—Raggedy Rock, Sailor Brook, Lumber Cove, Shag Roost, the Hairy Marsh—but much of this place lore has been lost in the shift to an English language culture. (Cox 1997, 136)

One of the benefits of place name fieldwork with contemporary tradition bearers is how it draws our attention to the symbiotic relationship between toponyms and oral narratives. Yi-Fu Tuan notes how this can heighten meaning for residents since these places become “...more real if not only the name is used but stories, continually elaborated, are told. What was a mere marker on the horizon can be transformed, by imaginative narrative, into a vivid presence.” (1991, 694).



(6.2: Map of Benacadie Pond, compiled by local tradition bearers. This maps contains names with descriptive, commemorative and supernatural associations.)

<i>Gob a' Rubha</i>	Tip of the Point	<i>Beul a' Phòin</i>	Pond Mouth
<i>Cnoc nan Sithichean</i>	Hill of the Fairies	<i>Beinn Phàdraig</i>	Patrick's Mountain
<i>Beinn Làraidh</i>	Larry's Mountain	<i>Pòn na Maiseadh</i>	Marshy Pond

Occasionally, etiological legends describe how an area was named, with many toponyms linked to the supernatural. Fairies, for example, are recalled in toponyms such as *Bruthach na Sìthich* (Fairy Hill) in Rear Big Pond and *Cnoc nan Sìthichean* (The Fairy Mound) in Benacadie Pond. Naturally enough, many such names are connected to local legends. A good example comes from Catalone. According to Allan MacLeod, *Sloc nam Bòcain* (The Hollow of the Spook) was supposed to be haunted by the spirit of a man murdered in the area long ago:

Bha iad a' cantail gu robh iad a' faicinn bòcan ann fad an t-siubhail. Chaidh cuideigin a' mharbhadh ann an toiseach o chionn fada... 'S an uair sin, chuir iad an t-aimn air, Sloc a' Bhòcain. Bha iad a' faicinn manadh duine. Bhiodh e a' crossadh a' rathad, 's bhiodh na h-eich, [bhiodh e] a' cur eagal air na h-eich. Bha eagal aca. (MacLeod 2014)

They were saying they were seeing a spook there all the time. Someone was killed there initially years ago. And then, they put that name on it, The Hollow of the Spook. They were seeing the apparition of a man. He would be crossing the road, and the horses would be, [it would be] scaring the horses. They were afraid.

As this example suggests, much of the meaning place names possess is rooted in their history. Working with tradition bearers offers an opportunity to record toponyms in proper social and geographic context: the point being that place names are best understood in relation to their physical location and social context. Once again, this highlights the importance of working with contemporary tradition bearers to gain a fuller understanding of the nature, distribution and location of Gaelic place names in Nova Scotia.

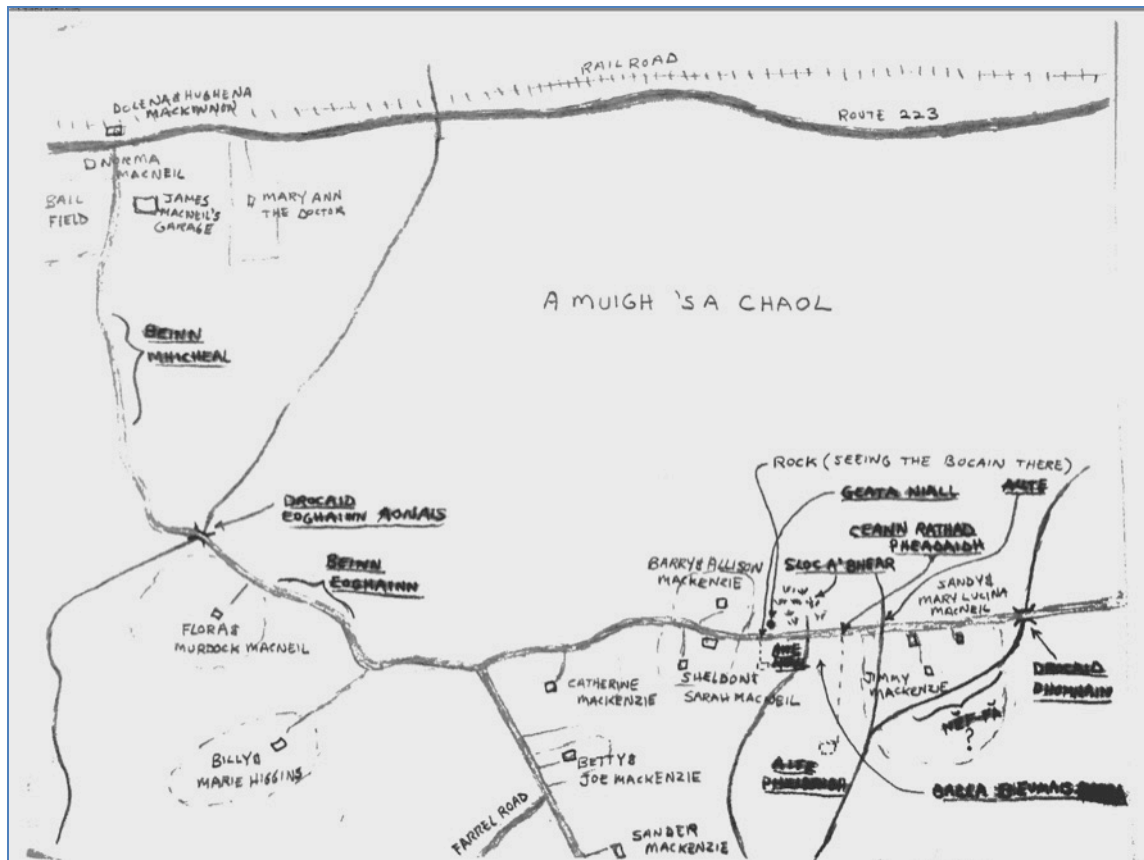
Fieldwork also reinforces the value of asking a broad range of residents about place names. Even residents without the language can make valuable contributions. Consider, for instance, 'Wild' Allan Bonnar. When I visited him in Bay St. Lawrence, Bonnar reeled off nearly a dozen traditional names from Black Point and Meat Cove. His interest in local history meant he remembered the following place names, even when he was not always sure what they meant:

<i>Cnoc nan Sìthichean</i>	The Fairy Knoll	<i>An Cnoc beag</i>	The Little Hill
<i>Tobhta Mhàrtainn</i>	Martin's Cellar	<i>Cnoc an Eich</i>	The Horse's Hill
<i>A' Bheinn Bhiorach</i>	The Steep Mountain	<i>An Rubha Beag</i>	The Little Point
<i>Baile MhicIosaig</i>	MacIsaac's Farm	<i>An Còbh Beag</i>	The Little Cove
<i>Rubha Pillein</i>	Saddle Cape	<i>Seonag's Pond</i>	Janette's Pond



(6.3: Map of Black Point and Meat Cove, as recalled by 'Wild' Allan Bonnar)

This is an impressive contribution, particularly since so little material was ever recorded from area residents. But it also attests to the value some residents assign place names. Toponyms like these are retained not because they serve an obvious utilitarian purpose today, but because they link residents to a place, people, and language they consider worth remembering. Barrie George certainly values names like these. When he heard about my research, he went home and drew the map below with the help of his mother, a native Gaelic speaker from Rear Big Beach, giving it the title, 'Out in the Rear' in Gaelic.



(6.4: Map of Rear Christmas Island and Rear Big Beach drawn by Barry George)

Familiarity with unofficial place names like these perpetuates a sense of belonging in a community since its use represents a kind of insider-knowledge. Finnish place name scholar Lars Hulden puts it this way: “To be familiar with the same names is to know a little about each other. Names are social signals of solidarity” (Quoted in Helleland 2012, 96). An example is provided in the following anecdote from Pictou County, where the place name used by a returning resident—apparently derived from *Sabhal* (Barn)—helps confirm his local status:

... one remembers how John MacPherson put much of Canada in perspective when he and Mrs. MacPherson returned home in 1926 after having resided on the Prairie for three years. When they detrained at Lansdowne he said for all to hear, “I wouldn’t give an acre on the top of Saval for the whole damned Saskatchewan.” (MacQuarrie 1975, 19)

Perhaps this also offers insight into the number of place names recalled by John Abram. After spending the first eight years of his life in the Protestant Orphanage in Halifax, Abram was adopted by a Gaelic speaking family in Lower St. Esprit. Out of necessity, he quickly learned the language. When we met several years ago, the ninety-five year old veteran, who spent much of his working life in Ontario, revealed an informed and enthusiastic interest in local place names that validated his sense and belonging and connection to St. Esprit.

Not surprisingly, many names uncovered through this research recall occupations and tradesmen that were once important fixtures in rural Nova Scotia. Remarking on the number of toponyms that relate to historic trades in Christmas Island, Catherine MacNeil wagered that “...*feumaidh, a’ nisd, a h-uile duine, teaghlach a thàinig anall, bha ciall air choireigin aca, eadar saor is tàilleirean ‘s gobhaichean ‘s feadhainn eile a’ deanamh bàtaichean* (...now, every person, every family who came over, must have had some kind of occupation, between carpenters and tailors and blacksmiths, other ones making boats.) (MacNeil 2009). The following are typical examples:

<i>Abhainn an Tàilleir</i>	The Taylor’s River	Framboise
<i>Pòn a’ Chùbair</i>	Cooper’s Pond	Christmas Island
<i>Cnoc na Cèardaich</i>	Smithy Hill	Castle Bay
<i>Gleann nam Bòrd</i>	Glen of Boards	Footcape
<i>Drochaid a’ Mhuilinn</i>	The Mill Bridge	Rear Christmas Island

Although these names bring to mind vital occupations in productive communities, they also suggest the static nature of the toponymic tradition in the region. No modern occupations are reflected in the place name corpus, nor are new names being created in Gaelic. Since a certain degree of generational change is expected in this tradition, the fixed nature of many of the toponyms uncovered through this research is best understood within the historical and linguistic context of the region. My fieldwork concentrated on the last generation to be raised within a

primarily Gaelic-speaking environment. Subsequent changes to the regional place name lexicon, initiated by the next generation, occurred in English. As a result, most toponyms reveal an archaic significance. Future residents will see the land differently because they use it differently. Most will think about it in another language too. But despite the static nature of the place name corpus, toponyms still possess the power to resonate with people, providing residents with a deepened sense of place and belonging as Jeff MacDonald makes clear:

The crux of it is—it's only valuable to those who value them. Like, those who are unaware, they're not missing them or anything. But to me, it'd be the same as what's the benefit of salt and pepper? Well, any of these things are just going to add to the whole experience. So if you're driving by these two abutments down there, and they've just always been there, well, they're not going to put you up or down. But, if you know that was *An Drochaid Dhearg*, and that a fella by the name of *Iain Mòr Beag* had second sight and saw *An Drochaid Dhearg* there before it was ever built, it just adds that much more spice to your existence in the area. (MacDonald 2015)

Taken together, the material explored in this chapter demonstrates how settlers and their descendants thought about their surroundings in Gaelic, instilling them with a sense of identity that reflected their own language and culture. The very nature of the naming tradition, which included many small landscape features, also indicates settlers and their descendants formed deep ties to the land they inhabited, gaining an intimate knowledge of its features over time and providing a sense of belonging. Familiarity with these place names allows community members to see layers of meaning in the landscape that are invisible to those without this knowledge. Names were part of this process but stories were also vital. Suzi Jones makes this point clear when she argues that knowledge of “regionally esoteric lore fosters a self-conscious awareness of membership in a regional folk group” (1976, 114). In the next chapter I expand on this point to explore other ways land has been transformed personally, socially, and culturally in Gaelic Nova Scotia.

Chapter Seven

Transforming Space into Place

If we accept that place, as a defined area to which people have ascribed meaning, stands in contrast to space, which is an abstract physical concept devoid of personal attachment or identity, then place making can be both a passive and active process. Meaning can be imbued in places through prolonged exposure and cumulative experience—as memories associated with parts of the natural and built landscape accumulate over time—or derive from direct intervention, as when clergy consecrate a piece of land for religious purposes. Yi-Fu Tuan summarizes the situation by writing that “What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value” (1979, 6).

For an immigrant group, the change from space to place is synonymous with developing a sense of belonging. It also represents a critical step in creating a sense of place, “that complex of meaning that gives landscape significance in the eyes of the people who inhabit it, marking it off from the surrounding terra incognita” (Ryden 1993: xiv). Taken together, a sense of place and belonging are central to notions of home since attachment to places—what Yi-Fu Tuan calls *topophilia*—goes beyond “a practical and official geographical knowledge. It encompasses feelings, dreams, hopes, values and beliefs” (Collignon 2006, 202). Exposure produces memories and memories, in turn, are frequently recalled in narrative form. While these connections may intensify over time, their development can begin in an instant.

For settlers from Highland Scotland, the process of turning space into place started soon after their arrival in Nova Scotia. As they moved into the interior sections of Colchester County, immigrants met members of the Mi’kmaq First Nation. According to local tradition, during one of these encounters a Mi’kmaq woman doused baby Catherine Sutherland in the New Portugal

Brook (Whisnot, n.d.). Although the custom was practical—Mi'kmaq believed it would instill in the child a healthy fear of water—the act clearly resonated with settlers and their descendants. Charged with symbolic overtones—settlers undoubtedly saw parallels with baptism—the story and location were never forgotten.

Not surprisingly, places that recall the spiritual lives of the settlers frequently assumed special meaning to their descendants; the physical locations where the seed of faith was planted in the New World. More than a century after settlement, John Lamont showed Major MacLeod the small hill in Trout Brook, Cape Breton County, where his pioneering ancestors prayed at the rising of the sun and close of the day (MacLeod 1974, 14). Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Rev. Ronald MacGillivray, who wrote extensively about the history and settlement of Antigonish County, was taken to the location where Rev. Alexander MacDonald, a pioneering priest, once celebrated Mass under a tree in St. Andrews (MacGillivray 1943, 9). The large elm tree under which Rev. James MacGregor conducted the first sermon in Bridgeville, Pictou County, was even better known. Eventually a plaque was erected to mark its significance. Featuring a psalm in English, it included the following directive in Gaelic and English: “*Fhir na coille na leag a chraobh seo*. Woodsmen spare this tree” (Bridgeville Women’s Institute 1973: 26).

Of course, meaning does not always grow in proportion to time. A historic battle, for instance, instantly imbues space with enduring significance. This process also occurs at the personal level, with moments of triumph or tragedy indelibly linked to places in personal memories. In either respect, places are created when they are instilled with meaning, since this gives them an individual identity. But places are also made in a very literal sense—emerging from anonymity full formed—when human perception and action combine to change the

landscape both physically and mentally. Consider, for instance, the following religious legend, told by Jeff MacDonald, which relates how a priest created a spring near Glendale:

Turas, bha e shuas a' seo a' dol a' dh'ionnsaigh a' chùil. Tha seann rathad fhathast a' sin ach chan eil móran 'ga chleachdadh tuilleadh. Agus bha e air an daorach còmhla ri fear eile. Agus 's e latha car teth a bh'ann agus bha an dithist aca gu math tioram—gu math pàiteach. Agus dh'fhalbh esan, taobh a rathaid, agus chladhaich e anns an mhòinteach agus anns a' bhuair ann a sin, agus thàinig uiste a-mach às a sin. Mar gun d'rinn e-fhèin fuaran. Agus cho fad 's a fiosrachadh mi, tha a' fuaran sin ann gus an latha an diugh. (MacDonald 2015)⁵

This time, he was up here going out towards the Rear. There's an old road still there but there aren't many who still use it. And he was on a drunk with another man. And it was kind of a hot day and the two of them were pretty dry—pretty thirsty. And he went, to the side of the road, and dug in the peat and the muck there, and out came water from that. Like he made a spring himself. And as far as I know, that spring is still there to this day.

Unlike most men, the priest in this story was able to draw water from the earth without effort.

Letting down his guard while intoxicated, his powers were exposed. His intemperance revealed his sanctity. In doing so, he formed part of the landscape. But this alone would not be enough to make it significant. Ultimately, the meaning associated with the spring is derived from the way in which it recalls a special moment in time: one that hints at the presence of the divine.

As this example suggests, even unassuming aspects of the natural and built environment provide visual connections to past events that trigger memories and contribute to their sense of belonging since as Yi-Fu Tuan writes: "... without exception humans grow attached to their native places, even if these should seem derelict of quality to outsiders" (1974, xiii). Having memories linked to parts of the local environment is fundamental to what it means to be from somewhere.

Evidence of the invisible bonds that connect people and place is found in the many small bridges that dot the landscape in rural Nova Scotia. While they serve an obvious utilitarian

⁵ A941.5. A941.5. *Spring breaks forth through power of saint.*

purpose, structures like these also represent visual reminders of how settlers tamed the environment. For many tradition bearers, the personal and cultural meanings they possess extend their symbolic value even further. For generations, bridges were gathering places for young people in the region. Informal dances were staged on their wood surfaces; local fiddlers and pipers played as young couples kicked up their heels. Alex MacLean, who was born in 1924, told me about the practice in Gabarus Lake, Cape Breton County: “They’d get a broom and they’d sweep off the gravel. There was no pavement then. They’d sweep off the gravel and everything and they’d come with the violins. It’s unheard of today” (MacLean 2006).

Dances like these were also regular features of life in Benacadie, Cape Breton County according to Michael Jack MacNeil: “*Bhiodh iad a’ dannsa, a h-uile ceann na seachdain, bhiodh iad a’ dannsa air an drochaid. Bhiodh Duncan a’ playeadh na fìdheal dhaibh. O, bha deagh dhannsaichean air an drochaid*” (They would be dancing, every weekend, they would be dancing on the bridge. Duncan would be playing the fiddle for them. Oh, there were good dances on the bridge)(MacNeil 2011). Due to their association with sociability, entertainment and courting, bridges evoke happy memories for many tradition bearers in the region. When he was asked about the names associated with various bridges in his community, the question triggered nostalgic memories for Catalone resident Allan MacLeod, who was born in 1928:

There’s a big bridge there—*An Drochaid Mhòr*— and they used to have dances on that. Young ones would all gather. They’d have a real good time. Stuff like that you miss, see? But you’re after growing out of it too. But you never realize that you are, see? And you’d walk for miles for that.... And then the girls would come out to different places, like, where the young fellas was, and about midnight you’d harness the horse, if they wouldn’t stay out, drive them back to Mira. Drive them back and then drive home, put the horse in the barn. But you didn’t mind doing that, see? They’d be there all wrapped in the rugs. It was nice I mean. And they were nice girls. (MacLeod 2015)

In connecting people to places, stories provide a vital service since they extend memories beyond the first person. Residents need not have attended dances on rural bridges, for example,

to retain an image of these gatherings linked to specific locales in their community. Asked about dances like these in Benacadie, Cape Breton County, for instance, Roddie Farrell, now in his late sixties, connects a practice he never saw to a place he knows quite well:

Oh my goodness yes! That was very prominent. In fact, right over here, at the old Iron Bridge, as it was called, Mom used to say, you know, they'd gather on a summer evening. Most likely on a weekend or whatever. And somebody would be playing the fiddle and they'd be dancing on the bridge. Sometimes, you know, it would rain because you couldn't contact Environment Canada then for a prognosis. And they'd be busy having a good time and the rain showers would come. There was one tree there big enough—it was kind of hollowed-out on the side, getting a bit aged I would imagine—I think they said there could be upwards of twelve people they could fit in there. Oh yah, that was very popular. (Farrell 2015)

As these accounts make clear, small places often loom large in our cognitive geography. Kent Ryden makes this point when he writes that, “We have much more direct experience of neighborhood or town than of state or country, have much more of our lives invested in the little places than in the big places” (Ryden 1993, 45). Additional evidence comes from Barra Glen, Victoria County. As we drove the back roads together, Maxie MacNeil spoke about the lasting interest residents had in an inconspicuous tree stump that once marked the roadside. He then proceeded to relate a local version of the vanishing hitchhiker legend (BE 332.3.3.1):

MM: I would say *Stumpa nam Bòcan* (Stump of the Spooks) was one of the spots that never lost its name at all. Other things came, oh well, you know, you forgot about, but *Stumpa nam Bòcan* was well remembered. Even as of today. It was right here. I guess there was a big pine tree and it fell down and there was a stump that was kind of renowned there for a while and I guess in the stories if a person was going to see anything it would be around the stump.

SM: And what was it? Lights?

MM: It wasn't too much lights, I don't think. Well, the one I remember quite a bit was *Frans Mhurchaidh* [Francis Murdock] in Barra Glen. When he used to work in at the convent at Iona. It was nothing for him to come home and when he'd be passing there, there'd be a lady come and sit in the wagon with him. Now I don't know, did he talk to her, but he got a little bit bolder as the years went by, I think, and when she'd get to about the crossings, she'd disappear. (MacDonald 2013, 212)

Stories like this are often fixed in place, but fluid in time. A specific location is provided, but the time remains imprecise. In this way, the primacy of place over period is made clear confirming what Lowenthal has written: “The locus of memory lies more readily in place than in time, in locale than in epoch” (Lowenthal 1997, 180). As Carl Von Sydow argued decades ago, connecting legends to local landmarks increases their relevance and interest to local residents. Yi-Fu Tuan extends this point further arguing myths and legends are “verbal and gestural efforts to construct and maintain place—to create a world that resonates to human needs and desires out of a neutral environment” (1991: 688). When these stories involve the supernatural, bonds to topographic features infuse the landscape with special qualities—portals to the otherworld, liminal areas where physical laws are suspended. In this way too a system of cultural beliefs from one region is transferred to another. When asked about the fairies in Rear Big Pond, for instance, Martha Ramey provides them with a geographical specificity that grounds belief in place—a local landmark she once knew well:

Bha, bha. Bha na daoine a’ creidsinn a’s na sìthich. Bha sinn a’ creidsinn unnda cuideachd. O, bha. Bha sinn cinnteach gu robh iad shuas ’s an abhainn. Bha creag mhòr ann—Creag an Tuill a bhiodh againn oirre. Agus toll mòr ann a siud a’ dol a-staigh gu fada. Sin far an robh iad a’ cantail gu robh na sìthich a’ fuireach. ’S tha cuimhn’ agam, bha glumag far an robh uiste a’ tighinn ’mach mu coinneamh a’ chlach... Bha iad a’ cantail riamh gu robh ceòl aig na sìthich; gu robh ceòl gàbhaidh aig na sìthich. Bha, bha iad a’ creidsinn unnda. Bhiodh iad ag obair air na beòthaichean. Cò dhiubh ris na h-eich. Rideadh nan eich ’s an oidhche... Dh’fhalbh iad dar a thàinig a h-uile rud eile. Chur iad teichadh orra. (Ramey 2010)

Yes, yes. The people believed in the fairies. We believed in them too. Oh, yes. We were sure they were up the river. There was a big rock there—the Rock of the Hole we called it. And it had a big hole in that, going in quite far. That’s where they were saying the fairies were living. And I remember, there was a pool where the water was coming out in front of the stone... They were always saying the fairies had music; that the fairies had tremendous music. Yes, yes, they believed in them. They would be bothering the animals. The horses anyway. They would ride the horses in the night... They left when everything else came. That put the run on them.

Of course, landmarks do more than ground belief; they also situate people in place, providing direction to residents while imposing a sense of order on the wilderness. Along the eastern coast of Cape Breton, large sections of barren land remain unsettled. Popular with berry-pickers, these exposed barrens can easily disorientate travellers but are not without directional markers for those able to recognize them. The ability to read these natural landscape features is an expertise grounded in experience, confirming that, “The power of local knowledge helps both to identify the outsider and to give the local the advantage” (Frake 1996, 248).

Reminiscing about his youth St. Esprit, John Abram, who was born in 1919, told me about a large, flat rock called *Creag an Dannsaidh* (The Dancing Rock) found in the Barrens. According to both written and oral accounts, the rock was so named because local residents would dance on its surface as they returned from picking berries there (Cumming *et al.* 1984, 23). In the following, Abram elaborated on its more practical use as a navigational landmark:

You weren't hearing the ocean when you were back there. And you had to have a mark to make your way out. If you heard the ocean, you would go for the ocean. But on that rock, you could make for Dan Hector MacDonald's. Mostly they were using it for a mark. Well, they were picking berries in the bogs around there. There was good bake-apple picking. And fox-berries (Abram 2014).

In addition to providing directional support, landmarks like this serve a deeper psychological need. In this case, the disorientation felt by travellers in the wild and exposed barrens was contained and controlled through the familiarity and positive connotations of the landmark. A human presence was thus imposed in an area where none previously existed. No doubt the name given to this rock also shaped perceptions of the barrens. This was, after all, a place where happiness existed, security was assured and weary travellers could dance.

Of course, our relationship with the land affects the scale through which we see its features. Older area residents were mostly raised on small farms, coming to know their

surroundings according to the slow pace of the horse and wagon. Travel to school, church and neighboring homes usually entailed walking. Recalling the situation in Rear Big Pond, Cape Breton County, Martha Ramey reminds us that: “*Bha a h-uile duine cho eòlach air coiseachd astar an uair sin. Cha robh uallach aig daoine coiseachd fada. Astar fada. Bha sinn cho eòlach air coiseachd*” (Everybody was so used to walking distances then. People weren’t burdened to walk far. A great distance. We were so used to walking) (Ramey 2010).

This slower pace undoubtedly shaped the way residents came to know their surroundings since it made them particularly familiar with small landscape features in their immediate environment. It also affected the kind of landmarks that were important to them; springs that quenched their thirst, small cairns that once marked the progress of caskets carried through the countryside and resting stones—boulders and large rocks located along the roadside—that invited weary walkers to relax for a moment (Dimock, n.d., 26).

Even inconspicuous stones could become important landmarks. Generations of residents once used examples to test their strength against each other, for instance. A good example comes from Gairloch, Pictou County. For generations the lifting-stone there attracted challengers from miles around. During the anniversary celebrations commemorating the arrival of the *Hector* in 1923, the stone was moved to Pictou to be displayed. According to one newspaper, its presence there stirred local pride, demonstrating to tourists and locals alike that “we still breed strong men who quail not over muscular feats accomplished by our grandfathers” (*Eastern Chronicle* September 18, 1923). Like its counterpart in Gairloch, a boulder in Big Beach lured strongmen in Christmas Island Parish. This landmark survives to this day, an object of continued pride for Cathie MacKinnon, who kept it freshly painted, making sure the name of one of the strong man who hoisted the stone was clearly visible on it (Stanley-Blackwell and MacDonald 2016, 17).

Of course, the connections we form to features of the natural and built environment are often intensely personal—replete with individual memories and significance. Taken together, the sum of their parts contributes to our sense of place and belonging. Although they may develop communal meaning, Thomas Thornton points out that places are ultimately personal constructions since “individuals within cultures do not view or relate to the landscape in exactly the same ways” (2008, 6).

Flora MacIsaac, who was raised in Rear Boisdale, and came of age during the Second World War, spent a recent winter writing about the community in which she was raised, its landmarks, residents and former way of life. The portrait she produced is certainly personal, but also affectionate, demonstrating the strong bonds she formed with parts of the landscape that form through everyday experience and exposure: “I love the Bourinot Road. I know every curve, hill and flat on it from St. Andrew’s Church to Steele’s Crossing. I know it because I’ve walked it hundreds of times when I was a child, a teenager and young woman. It took me to church, school, the store and visiting” (MacIsaac 2015, n.p.).

Mary Campbell also depicts an experiential connection to place. Asked which features of the local landscape were most important to her, Campbell demurred, explaining: “All of it, all of it has significance, an emotional identity which cannot be expressed in words. A person who wasn’t reared here, I would say, can identify intellectually but not emotionally” (Campbell 2015). This is an important observation that echoes what Yi-Fu Tuan has written about the difference between abstract knowledge and the experience of place:

Abstract knowledge about a place can be acquired in short order if one is diligent. The visual quality of an environment is quickly tallied if one has the artist’s eye. But the ‘feel’ of a place takes longer to acquire. It is made up of experiences, mostly fleeting and undramatic, repeated day after day and over the span of years. (Tuan 1974, 183)

The memory maps participants made as part of this thesis—intended to illuminate both personal connections and regional identities—provide additional insight into the close ties that formed between neighbours during their youth and the regional identities that persisted within parish boundaries, the *de facto* margins usually taken to represent larger settlements in this region. Even within this larger community, a strong sense of connection to smaller parts of that settlement can often be observed. In fact, one tradition bearer described regional identities within his parish as being so pronounced during his youth they were discernible within individual song repertoires (MacDonald 2013, 215).

Given the communal nature of immigration and settlement in Gaelic Nova Scotia, local identities can often be traced back to the Old Country. A humorous example comes from Loch Lomond, Richmond County. More than a century ago, a large church was built there to accommodate the unification of the two neighboring congregations. Featuring two steeples, with an entrance in each, the church architecture is said to have been designed to symbolize the merger of the two denominations, but regional identities—and a healthy dose of local chauvinism—proved a more powerful influence according to Rev. Neil MacLean:

But it happened that the people that came to the Free Church originally were from the Isle of Harris. Whereas the people that came to the Established Church were from the Isle of North Uist. So many people looked upon these two steeples as representing these two areas and I understand there were some people wouldn't go in to the other steeple because they were from the other island. (MacLean 2006)

Retained through narratives, communal memories like these exert a powerful influence on our sense of place and belonging. Kent Ryden makes this point when he writes that “folk narrative is a vital and powerful means by which knowledge of the invisible landscape is communicated, expressed and maintained” (1993, 45). The compelling nature of stories as a communicative device also allows them to impact people of various ages. Now in her late

thirties, Joanne MacIntyre is the youngest person consulted in this thesis, yet she spoke passionately about her connection to land in Mabou Coal Mines, Inverness County. A story that links her family to a local landmark has special significance to the singer and schoolteacher.

According to oral tradition, John Rankin (*Iain*), an immigrant from Lochabar, Scotland, was searching for stray cattle on a nearby mountain when a bear attacked him. Despite finding refuge in a sturdy tree, Rankin was injured in the attack and died two years later, leaving a wife and thirteen children behind. A visual reminder of the tragedy, the tree was spared and continued to grow. To generations of local people, it became known as *Craobh a' Mhathain* (The Bear Tree). According to MacIntyre, her father and his siblings used to play around the tree as children. These visits were not discouraged since the tree reminded the children of their ancestors and the need to be vigilant in the forest. As MacIntyre puts it, “the land gave them their history as opposed to a classroom” (MacIntyre 2015). Though the tree has since died, its name and story are not forgotten. Despite its tragic ending, MacIntyre draws inspiration from the story. In fact, she chose to name her debut album *Craobh a' Mhathain*. Featuring a variety of traditional Gaelic songs from Inverness County, the recording contains liner notes that provide insight into the name choice:

The memory of Iain remained very much alive in the collective consciousness of his family and community. Seven generations of my family have lived on that property since his arrival from Lochabar, Scotland with his parents and siblings. Those of us who were raised and still live on that property feel a connection to the land and an indebtedness for the sacrifices of our forefathers....When I reflect on this story that is so rooted in my own family history, a family legend in its own way, I try to image the depth of the anguish felt and I reflect on the strength of a woman who carried on, and I think about the spirit of a culture and a community that could hold on in the face of such a tragedy. (MacIntyre 2013)

A story about death is thus transformed into one about life. MacIntyre focuses not on the incident that killed John Rankin, but how his wife and family persevered in spite of it. In so

doing, she stresses not the tragedy, but the strength and resiliency it exposed. Given that she references a culture and community at the same time, we are left with the impression they too have the power to endure. This is undoubtedly an inspiring message for those concerned about the resiliency of Gaelic language and culture in Nova Scotia, the medium through which MacIntyre so ably expresses her talents. It also underscores the adaptability of the narrative tradition which, as Barbara Bender point out, allows stories to adapt and remain relevant over time: “Landscapes contain the traces of past activities, and people select the stories they tell, the memories and histories they evoke, the interpretive narratives that they weave, to further their activities in the present-future” (2001, 4).

Even without such a compelling narrative to propel them through time, landscape features can be invested with meaning grounding people in place and providing them with a sense of belonging. Like ordinary objects used by historical figures, much of their value is derived from their historical links and the memories—real or imagined—they provoke according to Mary Hufford: “Vernacular histories, whether stored in myths, artifacts, festivals, or landscapes, are vital resources for the ongoing construction of places and the social identities dependent on them” (1994, 7). As it happens, a tree in Glenora Falls, Inverness County, fulfills that role for the Campbells.

During the process of clearing land, John Campbell, an early immigrant from the Braes of Lochaber, left an elm standing in a flat, fertile section of his property. Over the years, the tree continued to grow, watching over his descendants and their land. As a living link to their past, it developed special meaning to members of the family. Mary Campbell, who lives on the original property and helps safeguard its history, made this clear when we spoke: “Every limb that fell off the tree we saved it. And we have them, like hanging. We have a great photo down here on the

wall. There's a limb over it. Or we gave them as gifts to relatives" (Campbell 2015).

Unfortunately, despite every effort to save it, the elm was not impervious to age. Twenty years ago, it had to be taken down. Though she kept pieces large and small, Campbell describes the decision to take the tree down as one of the most difficult of her life. Fortunately it led to a positive result:

...it was traumatic because the elm tree was part of the tradition handed down from generation to generation. It was about four hundred years old. But a miracle happened and a new elm sprouted up two years after and it's quite big now. So we have the young elm coming now. And the elm tree was sacred to our branch of the Campbells. And it appears that no matter where a building on the land here is erected an elm tree will be growing. (Campbell 2015)

This attachment recalls a well-established tradition that links trees and people in Gaelic Scotland. In fact, John MacInnes, a leading scholar in the history and culture of the Highlands and Islands, reminds us that, "*Chan eil samhla nas bitheanta ann am bàrdachd na Gàidhlig na samhla na craoibhe*" (There is no more common symbol in Gaelic poetry than the symbol of the tree) (Quoted in Newton 2013, 164). But regardless of these links to an older tradition, the elm possesses contemporary significance to Mary Campbell.

Over the years, it has been invested with symbolic meaning. Connecting the family to the land they love—and the ancestor who claimed it for them—the tree has come to symbolize both people and place. In fact, whenever there is a death in the family, Mary Campbell continues a family tradition in which a part of the tree, usually a small branch or piece of bark for instance, is placed in the casket alongside the deceased. She also sprinkles water from the brook that runs through the family property on the coffin, explaining: "It would be a memento of your root; where it all started. Where it all began on this side of the water. It was always done" (Campbell 2015). Through these actions, natural features of the local landscape, invested with meaning over time, take on sacred overtones, used alongside rosary beads and holy water.

Of course, places can be imbued with negative associations as readily as positive ones. In the previous two examples, trees were instilled with meaning due to personal connections to the pioneering era. Visiting in central Cape Breton, I was told about a tree imbued with more recent negative associations (George 2015). Gary and Barry George, who work in the woods and operate a local sawmill, learned about the tree while cutting in Rear Christmas Island. Though its appearance was not unusual, the spruce was singled out by a local landowner who advised against cutting it. Other woodsmen in the area were similarly instructed. More than one neighbour, it seems, wanted the tree protected. According to oral tradition, a local man named Mickey MacNeil (*Migi Ceataidh Thomais*) once saw the devil—or a similarly malevolent spirit—in the tree. With this vision, its fate was sealed. The tree would never be cut down, nor be anonymous again. The supernatural vision had given the tree an identity. According to the brothers, the injunction against cutting the tree was strictly observed, and it was left to decay naturally (George 2015).

In order to better understand the bonds Scottish Gaels have forged with land they settled in Nova Scotia, we must be willing to consider a broad range of natural and built landscape features residents consider meaningful because “When only monuments or high-style designs are taken seriously, the everyday environment is overlooked and undervalued” (Groth and Bressie 1997, 3). Similarly, any holistic portrait of these places must reflect not only their historical and personal value but supernatural or spiritual meaning as well since, as Jim Griffiths points out these “influence reality and indeed become reality” (1992, 45). We must ask ourselves not only what social processes shape the physical environment, but what mental processes shape perceptions of that region too.

Ultimately, the difference between space and place revolves around identity. As space is transformed into place through human agency—whether physical, experiential or cognitive—anonymous aspects of our everyday surroundings emerge from the shadows. In Rear Christmas Island an ubiquitous aspect of the natural environment was given an individual identity due to a connection with the supernatural. While nothing about its physical appearance made the spruce stand out, its story encouraged the eye to catch its form, and the heart to quicken its pace accordingly. In this way the transition between space and place can be said to make the invisible visible.

Even when not directly related to land, stories can provide insight into how residents conceptualize the landscape. Consider, for instance, how an unusual growth pattern provides evidence of the supernatural near Mabou. According to local legend a traveller was once abducted by the devil in the shape of a flying horse there. Though the man managed to escape, the event permanently scarred the earth below: “Today the log school house has rotted away and the road is wider. But the ground below where the mysterious animal flew overhead remains without healthy trees to this day, as though some force had blasted it with a vile force” (St. Clair 1998, 1). Like the story about the priest who created a spring, this account explains the creation of a landscape feature by linking it to the supernatural.

Personal and social bonds to place are also exposed in systems of belief. Many involve the dead. Though not unique to Scottish Gaels, these beliefs provide evidence of the ways settlers and their descendants saw the landscape in Nova Scotia. Tradition suggests, for example, that the spirit of the last person buried in the graveyard keeps watch over it until the next burial. Other stories recount how the dead return to watch over places that were important to them in life, maintaining a sense of responsibility for property from beyond the grave. When a man was

confronted by a spirit in Mabou, for instance, the otherworldly visitor asked him to follow him home where he “showed him several things that had to be done about the place...” (Fraser 2009, 61).

This pull towards place is exerted on the living too. Stories are still told about people who wanted to be elsewhere so badly their spirit travelled there without their knowledge. Mary Fraser describes the phenomenon and provides some good examples (2009, 52-56). According to one account, a young woman from Antigonish took sick while visiting family in Inverness County. As she knelt to say her prayers, she wished aloud she were home. That same night, many miles away, her sister saw someone praying in the living room who sounded like her sister in Cape Breton. A moment later the vision was gone. When the pair were reunited days later, they concluded the spirit of the sick woman had followed its desire and briefly returned home.

Not all such stories are so innocuous. Since the spirit that appeared was unconscious, its presence was considered unsafe. While some spirits were peaceful, others could be violent. Several years ago, Cathie MacKinnon told me a story of this kind involving her late husband. According to the account, John Neil had just gone to bed when he was set upon by a woman he recognized as a childhood friend. As he struggled with his assailant, MacKinnon sensed the presence of the supernatural and blessed himself. With that, the apparition vanished. MacKinnon concludes the account:

And he asked her where she was at a certain hour on a certain night. She said she was walking down the street somewhere in Montreal. And she got lonesome for Cape Breton. And with her heart and soul she wished she could be with him. And it was her spirit that came. So that was a live spirit fighting with a live man. And right here in this house! (MacKinnon 2012).

What do stories like these reveal about our connection to place? What is their cumulative effect on residents and their sense of belonging in Nova Scotia? While they undoubtedly influence

people differently, narratives like these communicate the powerful pull residents believe places in the region possess—a pull so strong it can separate body and soul. The beliefs that underlay these narratives reinforce the connections that exist between people and places, naturalizing feelings of responsibility, control and possession of land, while suggesting the danger inherent in too much longing for place. Taken as a whole, these narratives suggest the extent to which residents feel at home in Nova Scotia. After all, none recall an ancestral home across the sea and none of the dead choose to return there.

Instead, oral traditions are more likely to suggest the predestined nature of Scottish Gaelic settlement and expansion in Nova Scotia. Most evidence comes in the form of forerunners—psychic visions of the future—that form an important element in the belief system of Scottish Gaels. According to Gary and Barry George, lights used to be seen crossing over a pond near Christmas Island (George 2015). Years later, a causeway was built across the pond and car lights are now seen crossing it every night. Mary Fraser records a similar story from Inverness County. When the railway was being designed in the late nineteenth century, engineers arrived at a property and began to survey the front yard. The owner quickly emerged to inform them their work was pointless since the line would pass in the back. Visions of the train passing there had long been seen. When the railway was constructed the next year, it passed through the rear of the property just as predicted (Fraser 2009, 47).

In the following, Peggy Lydon, who was raised in Broad Cove Banks, Inverness County, during the first part of the twentieth century, tells the story of a young Protestant girl who ran away in order to become Catholic. Escaping into the forest, she fell asleep on a large stone. When she awakened, the girl saw a vision of a church before her. Several years later, a

community was established there and a church was erected near the stone, which can still be seen today.

Agus, an oidhche seo, dh'fhalbh i bhon taigh. 'S cha do dh'inns i càit' a' robh i ' dol. Ach bha aon teaghlach, gu robh meas aice orra, agus, a' rud a bha meas aca air, bha i ' gabhail a' Chonaire Mhoire, anns an fheasgar. Agus an oidhche seo, cha do dh'inns i dhaibh gu robh i ' dol suas River Denys. Agus, air a' clach mhòr seo, thuit i 'na cadal. Agus, dar a thuit i 'na cadal, dar a dhùisg i, chunnaic i eaglais. Agus, sin agad an eaglais a chur esan suas. (Lydon 2004)

And this night, she left from the house. And she didn't tell where she was going. But there was one family, that was fond of her, and the thing they liked, she was saying the rosary, in the evening. And this night, she didn't tell them she was going up to River Denys. And on this big rock, she fell asleep. And when she awakened, she saw a church. And, there you have the church he put up there.

Legends such as these subtly suggest settlement and expansion was both inevitable and natural in Nova Scotia. After all, the images they depict are not presented as possible realities, capable of being manipulated or changed. Instead, local residents understand forerunners to be inevitable visions of the future. Visions that come to pass confirm this expectation, while those that fail to materialize are rationalized as yet to come.

Nowhere is the predestined nature of settlement better conveyed than in a song composed by Angus R. MacDonald, who was raised in French Road, Cape Breton County. In its lyrics, a local mountain recounts how it was created for the MacDonalds and waited for their arrival for centuries. As it progresses, the song makes clear how indebted the family is to the mountain and the abundance it provides them. This anthropomorphism allows the bard to instill the mountain with sentient qualities, being capable of expressing emotion and getting to know the people who live on its slopes. As Donald Fergusson observes, by having the mountain be the speaker, the bard is able to “reveal more fully the Scottish settlers’ deep appreciation of the beauties and bounties of nature in this new land” (Fergusson 1977, 201).

*Bha mi 'n so, mu'n tainig Criosda,
'S mi 'nam laidhe 'n so, iar m' fhiaradh;
Leis an lochan so ri m'chliathaich;
Do Chloinn Domhnuill chaidh ar deanamh.*

*Tha mo cheann gu nochda, riabhach,
'S mi ri sealltuinn anns an air-'eas;
Cha'n eil beinn, an so, 'nam fhianais,
Nach robh 'n urram agam riamh orr'.*

*'S iomadh feum a rinn mi riamh dhuibh,
Ged nach d'fhuair mi taing, no fiach air:
Cumail connaidh agus biadh ribh,
Anns gach doigh a rinn sibh iarraidh.*

*Bidh eallach air mo dhruim, 's an t-samhraidh,
Do chrodh laoigh, do eich, 's do ghamhna:
'S mi 'gan arach dhuibh o Bhealltuinn,
Gus an tig am fuachd 's a' gheamhradh.*

*Thug mi dhuibh gu leor do choirce,
'S do bhuntata, mar a chosg sibh,
Feur, le dias bu bhriagha spealta,
'S dearcagan. 'us clobhar pailteas.*

*Tha lochan beag an so 'nam achlais
Bric 'us easganan, ro phailt ann;
Feasgar ciuin, le driuchd gu'm faic sibh,
Cuartagan, mu'n cuairt a' sgapadh.*

*Bidh eoin nan geug a' seinn am puirt dhomh,
'S cearcan air an lar 'gam feurach
Snagan ann an toll a' brosluin,
'S cailleach-oidhche an crann ag osnaich.*

*Fhad 's a bhios na neoil a' gluasad,
Mar a chuireas gaoth mu'n cuairt iad;
Fanaidh mise 'n so gun ghluasad,
Ri Cloinn Domhnuill, fhad 's is buan iad.*

*I was here before Christ's coming.
I was lying on the slope here,
With this little lake beside me;
For Clan Donald we were fashioned.*

And my head is bare and brindled,

O I am looking to the south west;
There's no mountain in my sight here
That was ever so respected.

Many needs I've always brought you
Though I'd get no thanks or payment,
Bringing wood and produce to you,
In all forms that you desired.

A burden's on my back in summer,
Your milk cows, your horses, heifers,
I'll be feeding them on May-day
Till the frost will come in winter.

I have brought you oats in plenty,
Your potatoes as you need them,
Hay with handsome heads for mowing,
Berries and abundant clover.

This little loch is nestled near me,
Trout and eels are here in plenty;
On eves calm and dewy you'll see
Ripples that are spreading over it.

The woodland birds their songs are singing,
On the ground the grouse are feeding,
Woodpeckers their holes are drilling,
Owls upon the trees are hooting.

So long as the clouds are drifting;
As the winds are whirling around them;
I'll be staying here unmoving,
With Clan Donald and forever. (Fergusson 1977, 200-201)

Remarkably, another song composed in the region does much the same. Resulting from a creative collaboration with Irish singer and songwriter Brian Ó hEadhra, its lyrics were composed by Jeff MacDonald. The song recounts the arrival of Gaels from the perspective of a local mountain in Glendale. When he wrote the song, MacDonald was apparently unaware of the song from French Road. While he modeled his creation on an Old Country composition in which an owl speaks, his inspiration was firmly rooted in Cape Breton: “The reason why I wanted it to

be about that mountain is because of what it means to me. All my life, I found that mountain so beautiful. Most days of my life—well, any days of my life living in this community, the mountain's been there. Just like your ancestors or your big brother" (MacDonald 2015). This familial rapport with the local landscape feature comes through clearly in the following lyrics:

*A dhaoine, bha mi seo bho'n a bhris an là,
Sìnte, gu sìtheil 'na mo shuain,
S an t-sìorrachd, am bòidhchead slàn mar a dheònach E,
S an nàdur a' freagairt dha mo dhuan.*

*Air maduinn, dh'fhairich mi ann dealachadh
Mo chaithris is m'ònrachd tighinn gu ceann
Ceòl na tuaighe is nan duanagan,
Dh'éisd mi is thog mi fhìn am fonn.*

*Daoine, daoine còire, curanta,
A ghiùlain gach cruadal 's càs gu treun,
Dualchas, dualchas beairteach, briagh, beò
Mar chàirdean, gu'n d'thug iad orm seinn.*

*Ach thàinig, thàinig oirnn an darna là,
Is chunnaic mi mo dhaltan a' sioladh às,
'S gann gu'n cluinn mi an cànan ceòlmhór, blasda, binn,
Cànan coimheach, cruaidh a' tighinn 'na h-àit'.*

*Tha sgleò, tha sgleò air tighinn air an àite seo,
Is sàmhchair bho'n a dh'fhalbh móran,
'Nam chaithris air mo chloinn 'nan cadal buan,
Fanaidh mi 'gan tàladh ann le'm òran*

O people, I was here since the dawning of the first day.
Reclining peacefully in my slumber,
In eternity, in total beauty as He willed it,
And nature suiting and replying to my songs.

In the morning, I sensed a change,
My watching and my solitude coming to an end,
The music of axes and of songs,
I listened and joined in with the chorus.

People, a kind and dauntless people,
Who bravely endured every hardship and distress,
A culture, a rich, beautiful, living culture,

As friends, they caused me to sing.

But great change overtook us,
And I saw my foster-children dying out,
Rarely do I hear the melodious, sweet language.
There's a foreign, hard-sounding language in its stead,

A pall has come upon this place,
And silence since, since so many have departed,
I am wakeful and watchful over my children in their eternal slumber,
I will remain, lullabying them with my song. (MacDonald, n.d.)

Though written generations apart—the first was likely composed in the late nineteenth century whereas the second for a recent music festival—both these songs share certain essential elements. Each portrays the local landscape as protective, generous, even familial. More importantly, both emphasize the reciprocal relationship the Gaels enjoyed with their local environment. After all, in both cases the mountains are glad for the presence of the Gaels. Significantly, the divine hand each implies is at work is not as evident in stories about emigration, a speculative and desperate move for many emigrants. Modern tradition bearers have assigned a confidence to their ancestors they likely lacked.

Given the prominent role the metaphysical assumes in narratives about place, we should not be surprised that some locations have assumed sacred overtones in Nova Scotia. This perspective can be found in direct comparisons to sites of religious importance: as when one bard compared Oregon, Victoria County, to Jerusalem (Thornhill 2006, 181). More typical is the manner in which faith underpins an understanding of the creation of the local landscape, its beauty and abundance. Though local religiosity has waned in recent decades, a spiritual framework continues to shape individual impressions of the region and its environment. Raised along the shores of Lake Ainslie, Barrie Fraser sees evidence of the divine in the natural beauty that surrounds him:

There's certainly a spiritual energy. Like say you're walking along the lake, and you'll see an eagle come flying along the water. There's something amazing about that. You know, that really—like the hymn 'How Great thou Art.' Are you familiar with that? I think that expresses the whole Christian—like it deals with nature and then deals with Jesus' death on the cross. Like, 'When through the forest glades I wander, and hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees.' You know, the whole thing, it's all—I mean it's the same God that created the earth that died on the cross. So, it can't help but be interconnected. (Fraser 2015)

Specific sites are also invested with sacred overtones. Some examples are sanctioned by the Church, others suggest vernacular interpretations of sacred significance. Oral traditions indicate that residents see parts of the local landscape as being made holy in a variety of ways, with divine intervention, human agency and mortal remains each contributing to the creation of a sacred geography in Gaelic Nova Scotia.

Every year on the Feast of the Assumption, for instance, Mickey MacNeil goes down to the Bras d'Or Lakes, where he collects water said to be made holy by the Virgin Mary. Collected water is used to bless homes and people in the same way as Holy Water. Though widespread—and associated with other bodies of water including the Northumberland Strait and Mira River—the custom appears most common to Scottish Gaels. When we went to the shore to collect water together, MacNeil told me Mary is believed to return to the area once a year on the anniversary of her assumption into Heaven. In the following, he explains:

Bha iad ag ràdh gun a chuir Muire, gun do chuir i a làmhann anns an uiste, a's a' léig. Agus bha na daoine a' dol sìos a h-uile—meadhan do mhios August. 'S e the feast of the Assumption a bh'ann. Agus bhiodh iad a' dol sìos a dh'iarraidh—bhiodh iad a' toirt soitheachan leatha a' toirt an uiste. Bha iad ag ràdh gu robh e beannaichte... dìreach 'son aon latha. (MacNeil 2015)

They were saying that Mary put, that she put her hands in the water, in the lake. And the people were going down every—the middle of the month of August. It's the feast of the Assumption. And they would go down to get—they would bring containers to collect the water. They were saying it was blessed...just for one day.

Because of the provisional blessing bestowed on the lake, local residents were encouraged to swim or wade in the water on the Feast of the Assumption, believing it contained curative properties. When we spoke several years ago, Murdock MacNeil, a former captain of the ferry that once plied the Barra Strait, vouched for the efficacy of this treatment. Suffering with sore legs and feet as a result of long hours in the ferry wheelhouse, MacNeil heard about the curative powers of the lake from a seemingly unlikely source— a sermon given by the local priest:

Tha cuimhn' a'm aon feasgar, bha mi ag obair shuas air an aiseag, anns a' Chaolas Mhòr. Feasgar brèagha samhraidh. Cola-deug do dh'August. Agus ge bith cò sagart a bha thall anns an eaglais aig Sanndra, bha aifreann air an fheasgar sin, agus chuala mi feadhainn gu leòr a bha thall 's an eaglais—muinntir taobh na Narrows—bha iad a' tilleadh 's bha iad ag innse, fhios agad, an searmon a rinn a' sagart mu dheidhinn duine sam bith a bha casan goirt aige, no sgàth, gum bu chòir dha ' dol sìos dhan léig agus a chasan a chuir 's an uiste. Gun deanadh e feum mhór dha. Agus bhithinn-sa, bhiodh mo chasan goirt cò dhiubh. Air tàilleabh, bha druim goirt agam 's bha mo chasan, bha iad riamh goirt. Ach tha cuimhn' a'm cò dhiubh, air a thàinig i gu as deoghaidh aon uair deug, bha mo chasan goirt alright. Nuair thainig captain eile a bha tighinn, nuair a thàinig e air a bhàta, dh'fhàg mise 's chaidh mi sìos. Phàisg mi suas osanan nan triùsair, thog mi dhiom mo bhrògan 's mo shogsaichean 's chuir mi mo chasan 's an uiste. Agus cha chreideadh sibh a Sheumais, cho math 's a bha na casan agam a' faireachdainn as a dheoghaidh sin. (MacNeil 2003)

I remember one afternoon, I was up working on the ferry, in the Barra Strait. A beautiful summer afternoon. The fifteenth of August. And whoever the priest was over in the church in Iona, he had Mass that afternoon, and I heard lots of people who were over in the church—people from Grand Narrows—they were returning and they were telling, you know, the sermon the priest made, about any person at all who had sore feet, or whatever, that they should go down to the lake and put their feet in the water. That it would do them a lot of good. And I would be, my feet were always sore because I had a bad back and my feet were always sore. When it got to be after eleven o'clock, when the other captain who was coming, when he came on board, I left and went down. I rolled up the cuffs of my trousers, and took off my shoes and socks, and put my feet in the water. And you wouldn't believe Shamus, how good my feet felt after that.

Murdock and Mickey conceive of a geographic space singled out and blessed by the Mother of God. The waters they overlook are charged with healing properties through her yearly visits. How could this not impact how they think about their surroundings? Surely it also helped

transform the foreign environment their ancestors confronted into the familiar and comforting region they call home today.

Residents have also taken an active role in creating the places they consider sacred. As they cleared land, built houses and established communities, Scottish Gaels, like other immigrants, came to see their surroundings in two parts, one sacred and the other profane. Suzi Jones highlights the universal nature of this way of conceptualizing space when she writes that “For religious man, space is not homogenous: parts of it are qualitatively different and are sacred spaces” (1976, 115). While clergy are usually responsible for consecrating land, during the earliest years of settlement clerics were scarce and settlers had to be buried in unconsecrated ground. In one of Patrick Nicholson’s columns in *The Casket* we learn about an early death in Boisdale, Cape Breton County, and the author suggests the picturesque piece of land where the pioneer child was buried was made holy by the settlers themselves:

Gu dearbh, ’s ann a shaoilte gu robh an t-ionad ud air a dheasachadh air thoiseach le Nadur fhein gu failte dheanamh ri corp aingeil; agus thiodhlaig iad an leanamh ann a chionn nach robh fhathast cladh ‘s an aite bha air a bheannachadh le sagart no le easbuig. ‘S ann a choisrig iad fhein e le ’n umhlachd an comhair Dhe le ’n gradh do ’n leanamh, le baigh is dilseachd an cairdean agus leis na deoir a shil o’n suilean.
(Nicholson, Oct. 28 1943)

Indeed, it would be thought the spot had been originally prepared by nature itself to make welcome the body of an angel; and they buried the child there because there was not yet a graveyard blessed by a priest or bishop. They consecrated it themselves, with obedience to God’s directive, with love for the child, with affection and faithfulness to friends, and with tears running from their eyes.

Significantly, Nicholson goes on to describe the perceived moral and spiritual superiority of the pioneers, using the story of the humble burial along the lake to criticize contemporary failings, reminding us that places in the local landscape can “...serve as both mnemonic devices and moral authority” (Kahn in Feld & Basso 1996, 176).

As the influence of the Church expanded during the second part of the nineteenth century, clergy assumed control of this process. For both social and religious reasons, being buried in ground consecrated by the Church became extremely important. Supernatural legends circulate about restless spirits buried in unconsecrated grounds while oral history records the human cost of enforcing rules about who could be buried in these grounds; women burying unbaptized infants in graves removed from their relatives and the metaphorical embrace of their community, for example. That the graveyard was considered an extension of the community is made clear in Pictou County, where visitors to the area were not buried in the church cemetery but in a place called “the stranger’s field” (Bridgeville Women’s Institute 1974, 49).

From their home overlooking the lake and graveyard in Christmas Island, Gary and Barry George related a story about a church-going man who neglected to perform his Easter duties. When he died shortly thereafter, his lapse in attendance was not forgotten. In order to make an example of him, the priest buried the man straddling the boundary between consecrated and unconsecrated ground, half inside and half outside the graveyard (George 2015). Cathie MacKinnon told me a similar story that concluded with more charitable solution directed from a higher source. Implicit in this narrative is the belief that a certain page in the book read at Mass reveals whether the deceased has been released from purgatory.

Bha fear a bha seo, às Pòn na Màiseadh. Agus ’s ann a taobh a’ phòin a bha e a’ fuireach. ’S dh’eug e. Cha bhiodh e ’ dol dhan eaglais glé thrì idir. Ach, tha teansa gu robh an duine alright, ach cha robh e a’ creidsinn ann a bhith ’ dol dhan eaglais. ’S thàinig am bàs air, ’s cha robh fios aca cà’ an tiodhlaicheadh iad e.

O chionn iomadach bliadhna, mur a robh thu ’ dol dhan eaglais, cha robh agad ri dhol dhan chladh idir. Bha an cladh air a bheannachadh. Agus ge b’e cò a bha càirdeas dha, thàinig iad a-nall, a dh’ionnsaigh an t-sagairt. Ach, chan eil mi ’ smaontinn gur e Fr. MacDonald a bh’ann idir. B’ e ’sagart a roimhe sin.

’S thuirt iad gun a dh’eug an duine a bha seo, ’s nach robh e ’ dol an còir eaglais, ’s nach robh fhios aca, cà’ an tiodhlaicheadh iad e. ’S gu’n d’thàinig iad a-nall ’son faighinn a-mach. ’S thuirt a’ sagart gu robh e ‘dol a-null dhan eaglais, agus start e air leughadh leabhar na h-aifrionn.

Is tha aon phìos do leabhar na h-eifrinne a tha duilleag ann a tha clear. Chan eil sgàth ri faicinn air an duilleig. Bha e a' leughadh 's a' leughadh às leabhar na h-eifrinne 's gu nach chuir e a làmh goirid idir dhan leabhar thionndaidh an duilleag a bha seo leis-a-fhéin. Stad e a' leughadh 's thuirt e,

'Thèid sa chladh Chaitligeach e, bidh e air a thiodhlachadh 's a cladh.'
(MacKinnon 2010)

This man was from Benacadie Pond. And he was living alongside the pond. And he died. He didn't go to church very often at all. But, it seems, he was an alright man, but he didn't believe in going to church. And he died, and they didn't know where they would bury him.

Years ago, if you didn't go to church, you weren't allowed to go to the graveyard. The graveyard had been blessed. And whoever was related to him, they came over, to the priest. I don't believe it was Fr. MacDonald at all. It was the priest before him.

And they said that this man here had died, and he didn't go near church, and they didn't know where they would bury him. And they had come over to find out. And the priest said he was going over to the church, and he started to read the book of the Mass.

And there is one part of the book of the Mass that is blank. There is nothing to be seen on the page. He was reading and reading from the book of the Mass and without putting his hand near to the book at all, this page turned by itself. He stopped reading and he said,

'Go to the Catholic graveyard, he will be buried in the cemetery.'

Narratives like these make clear the perceived difference between consecrated and unconsecrated land. While this perspective is quickly changing as the standing of the church changes, they demonstrate the mental division of land conceptualized by the church and the powerful effect this had on the worldview maintained by residents. Perhaps more importantly, they illustrate the active role residents, particularly clergy, have taken in making sacred places in Nova Scotia. In doing so, space was transformed into place and land was given a special identity in the eyes of generations of residents. As we explore the meaning of land to Gaels in Nova Scotia, we must be mindful of the personal and cognitive processes which drive this process since, as Yi-Fu Tuan points out, "Our society tends to discount the psychological, even though we know from common experience that changes in perception and attitude can seem to alter an environment more markedly than if it had been physically changed" (1991, 689).

While some places are made sacred through divine intervention and others through human agency, still more derive their meaning from a combination of the two. Consider, for instance, the local tradition of healing wells. Drawing on an older tradition from Europe, these natural springs were frequently credited with restorative powers that transcended their physical properties. The most famous example is undoubtedly the Glengarry Mineral Spring located near Big Pond, Cape Breton County. Bringing to mind stories about the settlement period, legend maintains a farmer pursuing his cattle through the woods discovered its curative properties. In an interview with *Cape Breton's Magazine*, Stephen W. MacNeil relates the story:

The cattle stopped at this place—a little brook there too—and he saw them drinking this water. And he went to investigate what it was, and he saw this spring there; he could see the water pumping up from way down. And he was crippled with rheumatism—he had to walk with a cane and all that—an old man, too, I guess, at the time—and he tasted the water and the taste was terrible, you know, salty and hard to drink. So he drank it anyways. He thought there might be a cure in it for his rheumatism. And the next day he went back after the cows, or with them again, and he drank some more of it. And in three or four days drinking this spring water, he threw the cane away—he was cured. (*Cape Breton's Magazine* 28, Inside Cover)

By the middle of the nineteenth century, the spring had attracted the attention of the provincial government. In his report as Commissioner of Crown Lands in 1860, Samuel Fairbanks remarks on the large number of people who visited the spring in the previous season, noting the economic potential eased access and improved shelter for visitors would present the province—shrewdly adding that, “There are a good many settlers at no great distance who have no grants and have not paid for their lands—the employment of these men in cutting out and making the road would be of mutual advantage to the province and to themselves—the prospect of payment for their lands in any other way I fear is very remote” (Report of Commissioner of Crown Lands, January 16, 1860).

While the mineral spring never garnered sustained government support—people were still calling for improved access nearly a century later—over time its healing waters assumed a prominent role in the cognitive geography of Cape Breton. As its reputation spread, people came to the spring from around the island and beyond. Stories about people healed by its waters can still be heard today. Although most cures were associated with arthritis or rheumatism, people suffering from other ailments also went to the spring, drinking its waters or using it topically. Recalling its popularity, a former area resident recalled, “For years I watched scores of rheumatics taken to the spring physically crippled and leaving in good health. Nor was the water used for that disease alone, but burns, sore ears and other ailments were cured completely” (*Cape Breton’s Magazine* 28, 33). In the following, Theresa Burke tells me about the first time she visited the Glengarry Mineral Spring, likely in the mid 1920s, and the effect its water had on her father:

Tha cuimhne agamsa a bhith ann—tric. Chaidh mi còmhla ri m’athair ann, is dà phiog aige. Bha varicose veins gàbhaidh air; cnapan mòr’ aig na casan aige ’s iad gàbhaidh fhéin crotaich. Cha robh mi ach naoi bliadhna. Agus bha e mu naoi mìle on àite againn-ne. Dh’fhalbh mi-fhìn ’s e-fhèin madainn tràth san t-Earrach ’mach dhan tobar leigheis ’s na piogagan seo aige. Piog crè a bh’unnda an uair sin - chan fhaigh thu an drasda iad. Bha dà dhiubh againn-ne, fear ruadh ’s fear gorm. Ach cò dhiubh, [unclear] sinn a-mach a’ sin ’s bha fhios aigesan glé mhath far an robh an tobar. Shin a’ chiad turas a bha mise ann. Lìon e na piogagan le uiste an tobair. Fhluich e a chasan, an uair sin le uiste an tobair. Thàinig sinn dhachaidh ’s a h-uile madainn fhluicheadh e a chasan le uiste an tobair. ’S tha cuimhn’ agamsa, as a dheoghaidh sin—chan eil cuimhn’ agam nuair a leigheis iad, leigheis na varicose veins, ach tha cuimhn’ agam air na casan aige—nach robh aon varicose vein ris ’na chasan. ’S e àite eireachdail a bha sin—an tobar leigheis. Nuair a rachadh tu a-mach, na craobhan mòr’, bha plaques bheag air a sgriobhadh ainmean nan daoine, cò às a robh iad, ’s carson a bha iad ann, robh iad ann le gille a bha tinn no duine a bha tinn no boireannach no coimhead airson cumhachd. (Burke 2011)

I remember being there—often. I went there with my father, and he had two jugs. He had bad varicose veins, big bumps on his legs and they were awfully crippled. I was only nine years old. And it was about nine miles from our place. I left with him on an early morning in the Spring, out to the healing well with his jugs. They were clay at the time, you won’t get them now. We had two, one red and one blue. But anyway, we arrived out

there, and he knew very well where the spring was. That's the first time I was there. He filled the jugs with the spring water. He wet his legs, at that time, with spring water. We came home and every morning he would wet his legs with the spring water. And I remember, after that—I don't remember when they healed, when the varicose veins healed, but I remember his legs—that there wasn't one varicose vein on his legs. It's a beautiful place there—the healing spring. When you would go out, the big trees, there were little plaques where names were written of the people, where they were from, why they were there, were they there with a little boy who was sick or a man that was sick or woman, or looking for strength.

Though less well-known, similar stories are told about a spring located in Ottawa Brook, Victoria County, known as *Tobar Mhìcheil Iain a' Roger* (Michael John the Roger's Well) or simply *An Tobair Leigheis* (The Healing Well). Several years ago, Daniel M. R. MacNeil, who was raised in Benacadie Pond, Cape Breton County, told me about a local man who had lost his appetite completely and whose health suffered accordingly. The man travelled to the spring in Ottawa Brook with some friends, where they drank its water and fell asleep. When his companions awoke, the sick man was eating their lunch. Before returning home, they were forced to stop at a nearby house so he could eat again. The spring waters had restored his appetite and good health (MacNeil 2004). Not surprisingly, accounts like this made visits to the spring popular with local residents. Eddie MacNeil, who was raised in Rear Christmas Island, recalled that, “A lot of people used to go there and wash their faces and their arms and their legs for rheumatism. And they said they got cured. You'd go by the truckloads up there on the weekend to get a cure” (MacNeil 2015).

Despite their popularity, these springs never enjoyed much in the way of formal publicity or infrastructure. No grottos would ever be built around them, nor spas promote their merits. Like many backland settlements, Glengarry gradually reverted to forest during the early twentieth century. As a result, getting to the mineral spring became increasingly difficult.

Lending his support to a drive to improve access to the area in 1947, J. J. MacMullen, who was raised nearby, suggests that:

If we were anxious to develop the tourist trade, we should grow by leaps and bounds, we would leave no stone unturned to develop our natural assets to the utmost. Such an asset is Tobar Leighis—that sparkling God-given gift now wrapped in obscurity should be given an opportunity to rank with its sister springs dotting the map across Europe and its famous health resorts. (*Cape Breton's Magazine* 28, 33)

While residents frequently reference the mineral and organic composition of the springs—suggesting a scientific basis for accounts of their restorative properties—the weight of evidence suggests most residents interpret their powers as supernatural. An excellent example comes from Sr. Margaret MacDonell. In the following, she recalls the ritual associated with seeking a cure from a healing spring in Hillsdale, Inverness County:

Fuaran Aonghais Dhòmhnaill: bha leigheis anns an fhuaran sin. Bha. Agus bha mo mhàthair ag innse dhomh mu dheidhinn. 'S ann a Hillsdale a bha sin cuideachd - Beinn Noah. Agus cha do reòthaich am fuaran idir air oidhche no latha. Agus nuair a rachadh—ma bha dèideadh no rud mar sin ort—nuair a rachadh tu a dh'ionnsaigh an fhuarain—agus thu balbh, gun thu bruidhinn ri duine—agus nan gabhadh tu naoi cupichean dhen uiste nad làmh, nan tugadh tu sin, agus thigeadh, an uair sin, dhachaidh, 's thug tàmh, bhiodh leigheis agad. Agus cha d'fhuair mi riamh fairis air rud mar sin ann an àite sam bidh eile na bu mhotha. Ach feumaidh gu robh àiteachan eile ann cuideachd. Fuaran Aonghais Dhòmhnaill. 'S ann a' baile Aonghais Dhòmhnaill a bha a' fuaran. (MacDonell 2014)

Angus Donald's Spring: there was a cure in that spring. There was. And my mother was telling me about it. That was also in Hillsdale—Beinn Noah. And that spring never froze day or night. And when you'd go—if you had a toothache or something like that—when you'd go towards the spring silently, without speaking to anyone—and you took nine cups of that water in your hand, if you took that, and would then go home and rest you would get cured. And I never got over something like that in any other place either. But there must have been other places too. Angus Donald's Spring. The spring was on Angus Donald's farm.

The metaphysical nature of this tradition is made clear elsewhere. When asked about the nature of the Glengarry Mineral Spring, for instance, Josie MacNeil explained: “It was blessed. It was blessed. There are gifts of God every day but the world's too pagan to see them. It was put

there for the people, and they were going to find out in God's good time—that it would cure. They'd find out when they needed it. And they needed it when they did find it (*Cape Breton's Magazine* 28, 35). Eddie MacNeil offered a similar explanation when I asked him about the curative properties of the spring in Ottawa Brook:

SM: *An robh iad a' creidsinn gur e fuaran beannaichte, no gur e minerals...?*
EM: *Fuaran beannaichte a bh'ann. 'S e. Bha iad a' toirt uiste dhachaidh cuideachd. Ma bha pàiste 's an taigh, 's cha robh e ' faireachdainn math, chuir iad an t-uisge air a' phàiste, air a' cheann aige. Ghabh iad urnaigh air a' phaiste 's bhiodh e alright.*
(MacNeil 2015)

SM: Were they believing it was a blessed spring, or that it was minerals...?
EM: It was a blessed spring. It was. They were taking water home too. If you had a child in the house, and it wasn't feeling well, they would put this water on the child, on his head. They would say prayers over the child and he would be alright.

The sacred significance of these natural landscape features is made explicit in a popular legend—with close parallels in Ireland—about a healing spring located in Irish Cove, Richmond County. According to local tradition, an entrepreneur recognized the commercial potential of the popular water source. After constructing a fence around the spring, he began to sell its water. Not long afterwards, the spring dried up and reappeared on the other side of the fence. For many tradition bearers, the story confirmed the sacred nature of the site, as Josie MacNeil concludes: “You can't commercialize on anything that's blessed” (*Cape Breton's Magazine* 28, 34).

Significantly, human intervention is also credited with instilling the springs with healing properties—or at least improving their efficacy. Mickey MacNeil, who lives near the healing spring in Ottawa Brook, suggests it must have been blessed by some unnamed priest in the past: *Chan eil fhios a'm a-nisd diamar a fhuair e – feumaidh gun deachaidh sagart ann airson a bheannachadh. Feumaidh gun deachaidh* (I don't know, now, how it got – a priest must have gone to bless it. He must have) (MacNeil 2010). Clergy are also thought to have blessed the

Glengarry Mineral Spring, as Stephen W. MacNeil pointed out to Ronald Caplan, “Well the old priests that were here before my time were supposed to have blessed it...” (Quoted in *Cape Breton’s Magazine* 28, 32) According to author Michael B. MacKenzie, Msgr. Neil MacLeod blessed the Glengarry Mineral Spring during his pastorate in East Bay, which ended in 1872 (MacKenzie 1988, 132). If this date is accurate, the spring was likely blessed not long after its discovery.

This clerical involvement can be read as co-opting an ancient vernacular tradition—long established in the parts of Gaelic Scotland from which area settlers emigrated—ensuring it was controlled by the Church. But we must also remember that local priests during this period were nearly always drawn from the same cultural background as their parishioners, meaning they too may have subscribed to beliefs about the healing powers of the springs. In either case, the formal approval suggested by their involvement in the healing springs undoubtedly helped legitimate them—and give credence to stories about their miraculous properties—despite not being dedicated to any saints or religious figures. Michael Carroll, who has described the holy well tradition in Ireland, goes so far as to suggest that, “legitimacy was a necessary precondition of their popularity” (Carroll 1999, 157). According to Michael MacKenzie the perceived approval did indeed add to the allure of the Glengarry Mineral Spring: “Some see the curative power of the spring as stemming from the blessing accorded it by Father MacLeod” (MacKenzie 1988, 133).

Human agency is thus seen as having inscribed sacred significance in parts of the natural landscape. On occasion tradition bearers expand on this point further, suggesting land has been made sacred through the physical presence of people. Consider, for instance, the case of Rev. Archie MacLellan, from Broad Cove, Inverness County. During his priesthood, MacLellan

developed a reputation for miraculous healing. Stories are still told about how he cured the sick and dying. Devotion to the priest did not end with his death nearly fifty years ago. Anna MacKinnon, whom he helped as a young woman, continues to pray to him daily. Such acts of faith have a physical counterpart. Residents are known to visit his grave, taking small stones or soil thought to bring protection and healing. Perhaps as a result, little grass grows there. Katie Maggie MacLeod explains: *Clachan beaga. 'S iad a tha ' cladhaich sìos, gheobh iad iad. Tha iad ag ràdhainn, gum beannaich iad an ceàrr ortsa. Chure iad rud. Agus urnaigh ghabhail thuigesan, 's gu faigh thu leigheas.* (Little stones. And those who dig down, they get them. They say that they bless what's wrong with you. They cure something—and saying prayers to him—you will be healed) (MacLeod 2010). In this way, the physical presence of the healing priest is seen to have sanctified the surrounding soil, infusing land with a significance above and beyond its status as consecrated land.

The manner in which the dead give meaning to land through the sacrosanct nature of their mortal remains is suggested elsewhere. Though he comes from an Irish background, Bob Fitzgerald, who grew up in White Point, Victoria County, shares much in common with his Scottish Gaelic neighbours and articulates this perspective well. Speaking about the settlers and their descendants, Fitzgerald concludes: “And then, when they did everything they could, and everything that they had to do, or where they were able to do, they died. And they left their bones in the land to consecrate the ground forever that God gave them” (*Cape Breton's Magazine* 28, 92).

Taken as a whole, the material explored in this chapter demonstrates the personal and social connections Scottish Gaels have forged with large and small parts of the natural and built landscape they inhabit and how residents interpret the region in both a physical and metaphysical

framework. The next chapter expands the lens to investigate how these bonds inform the way residents view larger parts of the region and how this fosters local loyalties and identities in the region.

Chapter Eight

Perceptions of Region

When he died a few years ago at the age of ninety-nine, Peter Jack MacLean was one of the most respected tradition bearers in Gaelic Nova Scotia. The following summer a gathering dedicated to his memory was organized at the local firehall. Various people were invited to speak about his role as a singer, mentor, and friend. Towards the end of the evening a few letters were read aloud. One came from a respected academic from Ireland. Vividly recalling the first time he visited Peter, the author described travelling deep into the forest to his home in Rear Christmas Island. Though not intended to be humorous, the hall filled with muffled laughter as audience members responded by shaking their heads and smiling knowingly. None considered the location particularly remote. Despite the trees and dirt roads, they saw the area differently.

Toponyms, oral history, and narratives demonstrate that Scottish Gaels formed strong attachments to specific elements of the natural and built landscape in Nova Scotia. No doubt this has affected how current residents feel about the region they inhabit as a whole. Notwithstanding stories about the work immigrants faced in the province, for example, participants invariably concluded that their ancestors were right to come to Nova Scotia. As writer David Craig discovered during his travels to Cape Breton, “The people we met were proud to have been part of the migration rather than troubled that it had ever been necessary” (1997, 88).

This consensus is hardly new. Writing only a generation after large scale immigration came to an end, historian J. W. MacDonald claimed, “That the condition of these people has been improved by coming to this country, no one who has seen both countries can for a moment doubt” (1876, 53). Expanding on this theme during the same period, Richard Brown explains:

Although many of the first settlers came to Cape Breton sorely against their will, none, I believe, have had reason to regret the change from the wretched abodes they left to the

comfortable homes they now occupy. Even the log hut, in the depth of the forest, is a palace compared with some of the turf cabins of Sutherland or the Hebrides. (Brown 1869, 425-426)

According to modern tradition bearers, emigration afforded settlers and their descendants numerous benefits. These extended from religious freedom and private land ownership to cultural autonomy and greater economic opportunity. Containing both literal and symbolic significance, Fr. Allan MacMillan suggests the richness of the natural environment even stimulated their physical growth: “Some of the men in those first two generations, you know, they just grew to be almost like giants. It gave such a spurt of growth to them that I suspect would never have occurred if they were still at home, you know, just eking out a living on the rocks or the seashore where they had been” (MacMillan 2015).

Oral traditions support the proposition that immigrants were wise to move to Nova Scotia. Significantly, many settlers appear to have come to this conclusion as well. Despite popular stereotypes depicting the pioneers as homesick exiles, John Shaw assures us that “The general view of immigration set forth in orally transmitted songs and local or family oral histories is characteristically forward-looking with few instances of Old World nostalgia or aristocratic content” (1996, 345).

While the distress brought about by emigration is not ignored in songs, Sister Margaret MacDonell reminds us that bards “usually tempered their compositions with a note of optimism as they looked to a more prosperous future” (1982, 3). Jim Watson expands on this point, arguing that, “There’s no evidence to suggest—and I would hardly be the first one to espouse this—there’s no evidence, no serious, cumulative, collective, voluminous evidence to suggest that there was any real longing for *an t-Seann Dùthaich* [the Old County]” (Watson 2015).

Though emigrants may have been reluctant to leave Scotland, few appear to have

regretted their decision to do so after an initial period of adjustment. Perhaps the most obvious sign of their contentment is the regularity with which they encouraged friends and family to join them in the New World. Writing relatives back in Scotland in 1830, Donald Campbell had the following to say: “I wish you would still think of coming when I know it would be better for you than being at Tung or any part of Lewis or Harris—you would have lands here for ever for yourself and children ...” (Campbell to relative, October 7, 1830). Similar promises are contained in period songs. Highlighting the chance to escape an exploitive land tenantry system, the following verse is typical. It comes from a song composed by Malcolm Buchanan, who immigrated to Prince Edward Island in 1803:

*Ach ma théid thu gu bràth
A null thairis air sàil,
Thoir mo shoraidh gu càirdean eòlach
Thoir dhaibh cuireadh gun dàil
Iad a theicheadh o’n mhàl
'S iad a' tighinn cho tràth 's bu chòir dhaibh*

But if you ever go
over the sea
bring my greeting to my friends.
Urge them without delay
to flee the rents
and come out as soon as opportune for them.
(MacDonell 1982, 110-111)

Because settlers rarely recorded their early impressions in print, songs like this offer important evidence of their thoughts and motivations, providing, according to Effie Rankin, “rare insight into the feelings and emotions of ordinary men and women” (2004, 20). While some express remorse, frustration, and disappointment, others are optimistic and hopeful. Not surprisingly, the economic and social status of the composer often shaped initial reactions since, as Michael Newton notes, “Those who came from the lower social orders along with their extended families and friends, and did not have major

economic or practical obstacles to overcome to commence their livelihood, were the most likely to express satisfaction with immigration” (2015, 184).

Credited with composing the first Gaelic song in Cape Breton, Michael MacDonald paints a glowing picture of the natural beauty and abundance he discovered in the region (See MacDonell 1982, 58-59). The Bard MacLean, on the other hand, complains bitterly about the climate, pests and drudgery inherent in the pioneering experience (See Dunn 1991, 28). In one notable case divergent perspectives like these confronted each other directly. Shortly after settling in Mabou, John MacDonald, a former civil engineer and professional deer stalker, composed a nostalgic song recalling his former life in Scotland, contrasting its relative ease with the harsh reality he confronted in Nova Scotia. When his unflattering depiction of the settlement and its inhabitants reached his cousin, Allan, he was deeply offended. Having settled in the region years earlier, Allan MacDonald vented his frustration in song. Scolding his cousin for his arrogance and lack of vision, MacDonald describes their former homeland as a place without kindness. He reminds him that immigrants are able to escape social and economic injustice by coming to Nova Scotia, where freedom, wealth and land are available to settlers. Significantly, both men emphasize the role land played in attracting immigrants to Nova Scotia.

*Nis o’n thàinig thu thar sàile
Chum an àite ghrinn
Cha bhi fàilinn ort ri d’latha
‘S gach aon nì fàs dhuinn fhìn:
Gheibh thu mìl air bhàrr nan lusan
Siùcar agus tì,
‘S fheàrr dhut sid na’n tìr a dh’fhàg thu
Aig a’ ghràisg na frìth*

Now that you have come overseas

To this fine place,
You will lack for nothing all your days
As all things fare well for us:
You shall have honey from the flowers
Sugar and also tea,
Much better than the land you left
To the rabble in the mountains. (Rankin 2004, 78-79)

With time, positive appraisals like this became the norm. As settlers and their descendants came to see the region as their home—adjusting to a new climate, environment and lifestyle—the way they described it changed. Even the Bard MacLean, who wrote so bitterly about his experience clearing the forest, came to see the merit of Pictou County. Offered free passage back to Scotland, he chose to stay. Time would often play a vital role in how settlers viewed and described their new surroundings and environment. The forested landscape that had left many settlers overwhelmed would eventually become an economic advantage and comforting presence. Likewise, the harsh winter conditions immigrants described would be recalled as times of merriment and sociability in songs composed by their descendants.

Of course, the reverse is also true. While cultural and linguistic ties to the Highlands and Islands were maintained in Nova Scotia, personal and social bonds with its landscape were severed through emigration. Ironically, its treeless expanses are now as foreign and intimidating to area residents as the wooded valleys and snowy hills of the province were to their ancestors. Evoking the memory of a well known Gaelic singer from central Cape Breton, Jim Watson highlighted a typical reaction: “I don’t know how many times I’ve talked to people such as the late Margaret MacLean from Boisdale who visited Barra, the home of her own eponymous ancestors, and came home saying, ‘God, what a terrible place, no wonder they left!’” (Watson 2015).

To be clear, this is no indictment against the people, culture and history of the Highlands and Islands, which residents are quick to praise. Instead, it suggests an evolution in the type of landscape in which they feel comfortable. Not surprisingly, those raised on farms and accustomed to work in the woods often find the open, rocky vistas their ancestors occupied barren and exposed. Though they may recognize its scenic qualities, they no longer feel at home there.

An early impression comes from Fr. John Hugh Gillis, who was raised in MacKinnon's Harbour, Victoria County. Returning home from his ordination in Rome in 1934, Fr. John Hugh wanted to spend some time visiting the island from which his ancestors emigrated. Recalling his initial impressions of Barra, he once told me: "When you go, you'll do this same thing as me. You'll get off the boat, look around, get down on your knees, and thank God we got the hell out of there!" Though told in a humorous vein, his reaction to the rocky island landscape demonstrates the extent to which the descendants of Highland settlers have developed a sense of belonging in Nova Scotia.

This attitude stands in contrast to popular depictions of the Gaels of Nova Scotia, which frequently portray them as a banished people clinging to the past. John Lorne Campbell, the first person to make recordings of the Gaelic tradition in Nova Scotia, named the book describing these efforts *Songs remembered in exile* (Campbell 1990). Similarly, a BBC documentary focused on the local tradition described Gaels in Cape Breton as "Neither Canadian nor Scots, but people who have been dislocated, uprooted" (Quoted in Doherty 1996, 50). The notion that Gaels immediately felt at home in the region due to an apparent geographical similarity to Scotland, often espoused by

tartanism, also represents a historical obfuscation. Settlers rarely made such comparisons themselves; nor do their descendants embrace this perspective.

Raised in North River, Victoria County, Archie MacDonald provides a good example. While he enjoyed his visit to Lewis, the island from which his ancestors emigrated, MacDonald saw little merit in its landscape: “Oh Jeeze, hard old country. Nothing but rocks out there. It’s all rocks. They fish. Always fishing out there. They weren’t able to farm or anything. Rocks and sheep”(MacDonald 2014). Another area resident offers an even more unsentimental impression, describing the island from which his ancestors emigrated in the following way: “A big rock where a lot of sheep shit so a little bit of grass grew. I think there’s eighteen trees in the forest” (MacNeil *et al* 2015).

What do reactions like these tell us about local residents, their sense of belonging and connection to the Old Country? Devoid of the romantic and sentimental ideals so often espoused by tourists probing their ancestral connections to Scotland, they suggest a people alert to the cultural, linguistic and familial ties that bind them to the Highlands, but possessing a sense of place that grounds them in Nova Scotia.

Archie MacDonald and others have no need to construct a sense of connection to Gaelic Scotland since these bonds are self-evident and fully formed. Perhaps as a result they are not compelled to project a sense of identity onto its landscape, reminding us that, “To have roots in a place is to have a secure point from which to look out on the world, a firm grasp of one’s own position in the order of things, and a significant spiritual and psychological attachment to somewhere in particular” (Edward Relph quoted in Smyth 2001, 128). Indeed, the situation calls to mind what Gerald Pocius observed in Newfoundland, where people without strong ties to place have often been at the forefront

of cultural nationalism (2000, 23). Ian MacKay has described the corollary, writing that, “Perhaps no one speaks more fervently of the depth and the vitality of his or her roots than the person who suspects such roots are no longer securely grounded in anything” (1994, 222).

Songs provide additional evidence of the extent to which Scottish Gaels came to feel at home in Nova Scotia. As settlements in the region grew, bards drew on a long tradition of panegyric poetry to praise their surroundings in ways that express “more than a parochial pride in the local scene” (Dunn 1991 [1953], 160). Although poems that praise the region as a whole are not absent from the local song corpus—Cape Breton Island is a frequent muse—local bards were more often compelled to focus their poetic talents on smaller areas. This tendency reflects the realities of life in nineteenth and early twentieth century Nova Scotia, where a subsistence lifestyle, predicated on reciprocity, encouraged the development of a strong local sense of belonging.

John Shaw points out that local nineteenth century compositions also preserved a poetic style that was displaced in Scotland. This realistic technique valued sharp, detailed, unadorned descriptions, largely devoid of personal comment (1996, 350). In other words, the tradition itself encouraged close observation of the natural environment. Malcolm Gillis, Hugh F. MacKenzie, and Dan Alex MacDonald were gifted exemplars of this tradition.

Perceived divisions, whether geographic, social or economic, instilled a strong local sense of belonging in area residents. Even within small rural communities, a connection to smaller parts of that community is easily discerned. Over time, this local expertise and sense of community deepened, giving rise to distinct regional identities,

even within small culturally and religiously homogeneous communities, not unlike neighbourhoods within cities.

Without doubt, the most persistent and important geographical and social divisions that emerged in communities in Gaelic Nova Scotia—resistant to both time and outmigration—were those between residents who lived along the shore, called the Front, and those who lived in the backlands, or the Rear. The extent to which these boundaries defined a sense of belonging for residents is also made clear through song. The most famous example comes from nineteenth century Inverness County.

Born in the Rear of South West Margaree in 1830, Donald MacDonald was a backland bard who moved to the shore for work but was unimpressed by what he found there. His native pride bursts forth in a song in which he praises life in the backlands while criticizing the people and property he found in the Front. Describing the fishermen he encountered as rabble, he goes on to describe their properties as cold, windy and unproductive. The backlands, on the other hand, are depicted as a sheltered oasis, verdant, fruitful and abundant. The following verses are typical:

*'S ann do 'n Chùl a thug mise rùn,
'S gu 'n dùraiginn bhith 'n còmhnuidh ann,
Far am fàs a' choille dhlùth,
Gu slatach, lùbach, meòireanach;
I cho dùbhghorm, maothbhog, sùghmhor,
'S duilleach ùr 'ga còmhdachadh;
Fàileadh cùbhraidh thar gach flùr
Th' air feadh nan lùb 's nan srònagan.*

*'S ann an so tha 'n t-àite truagh,
'S e 's suarach' tha 'san riòghachd so,
E cho deiseil ris an fhuachd,
'S an àird a tuath cho dìreach air;
H-uile latha soirbheas fuar
A' lomadh suas nan clirichean,
'S na bailtean tha ri taobh a' chuain*

Lan sgriodain ruadh is ghrìogagan

It is the Rear to which I gave my affection and there I'd always like to be: where the forest grows dense with bending branches and limbs: iris dark-green, soft-shooted, full of sap when fresh foliage clothes it: a sweet fragrance rises from every flower which grows among its winding hummocks

This is indeed a poor place, the meanest in this land. It is open to the cold, in direct line with the North. Every day a chill wind blows which strips the clearings, while the seaside farms are full of red scree and pebbles. (*Cape Breton's Magazine* 59, 63)

Such a bold volley against the shore naturally provoked a reply. In a song of his own, Duncan MacLellan challenged the points leveled against the Front, contradicting the positive portrayal of the backlands provided by MacDonald, and sharing his own criticisms of the Rear. This is a strong, expressive, and clever poetic flyting. But it also suggests the very real divisions that existed in communities of Scottish Gaels in Nova Scotia. Though immigration is popularly thought to have been a socially leveling experience in this community, real and perceived differences in land resulted in enduring social and economic divisions in Gaelic Nova Scotia.

Several scholars have explored these divisions, arguing that residents in the backlands were at a clear disadvantage. Using archival records and census returns, for instance, Stephen Hornsby and Rusty Bittermann contend that much of the land settled in the backlands was “wretchedly bad” (Hornsby 1992, 57) and made “farm-making arduous and costly” (Bitterman 1988, 43). Hornsby had earlier concluded that “Compared to the frontland settlers, the backland farmer lived a more isolated life, detached from community activity by terrain, distance and poverty” (1986, 135). Other scholars have painted a similar portrait of the backlands, an area John Shaw describes as “the poorer, less fertile upland portions known in Gaelic as *an Cùl* (the Rear)”

(MacLellan 2000, 5). But what do local residents have to say about the backlands? And what was the personal and cultural impact of social stratification in Gaelic Nova Scotia?

As it happens, residents regularly contradict claims about poor quality land in the backlands. When asked whether the land in Rear Boisdale was good, for instance, Flora MacIsaac was unambiguous: “*O, bha. Bha an talamh math. Bha a h-uile sìan a’ fàs math.*” (Oh yes. Yes, the ground was good. Everything was growing well) (MacIsaac 2015). Martha Ramey claimed land removed from the shore was actually superior in Big Pond: “*Bha i a b’fheàrr air a’ chùl. Bha, bha. Bha an t-àit’ againne-fhìnn a b’fheàrr dhiubh uileadh, a b’fheàrr dhiubh uileadh. Cha robh talamh ann an àite sam bith coltach ris – cho math ’s a dh’ fhàsadh a h-uile rud*” (It was best in the Rear. Yes, yes. Our place was the best of them all, the best of them all. There wasn’t ground like it anywhere—how well everything would grow) (Ramey 2013).

Even isolated plateau settlements abandoned generations ago can be depicted in favorable terms. Speaking about properties in the backlands of Christmas Island, Alex MacDonald was told they were more fertile than the slopes (MacDonald 2007). Daniel M. R. MacNeil heard much the same, adding that settlers actually preferred them: “*Thog iad na taighean suas air baile na beannaibh. Bha iad ag ràdh gu robh fearann nas fhèarr airson tuathanach, shuas a sin. Agus sin far a robh iad a’ dèanamh tuathanachas, suas air mullach na beannaibh*” (They built the houses up in the mountain settlement. They were saying that the land was better for farming up there. And that’s where they were doing the farming, up at the summit of the mountains)(MacNeil 2003).

Fr. Allan MacMillan told me upland properties in central Cape Breton were hardly inferior to their counterparts along the lake: “The people up on the mountain, they

had good land up there, and of course lots of drainage. And the same thing, you know, back in Boisdale, even in Beaver Cove, way up on the mountain, you get these plateaus very often, and wonderful drainage, and everything” (MacMillan 2015). Such positive impressions are deeply rooted. Historic descriptions also praise the fertility and beauty of the backlands. During the early settlement period, Lord Selkirk claimed that land in the uplands of Pictou County was superior to anything available in Prince Edward Island (Selkirk 1958, 48). In a 1943 column of *Achadh nan Gàidheal*, Mgr. Patrick Nicholson depicted a now abandoned community in the rear of Boisdale as a kind of paradise for Gaels:

Nuair a rainig na h-eileanaich cladaich Cheap Breatain, bha sannt mor ac’ air fearann. Bha iad air croitean beaga fhagail ’n an deidh far an robh iad air an cumail fo chuing le laghannan is riaghailteas; agus nuair a thainig iad do dhuthaich uir de mhiad anabarrach, saor do na h-uile, ghabh iad sealbh air fearainn cho mor ’s gu ’m b’fheudar do ’n fheadhainn a bha anamoch a’ tighinn dol do dh’aiteachan mi-fhreagarrach, no do na cuil. Ged a thainig Alasdair do ’n duthaich beagan bhliadhnaichean an deidh nan ciad Ghaidheal, cha robh air fhagail aige ach fearann cuil. Thog e aite ’s a’ Ghleann Mhor comhla ri grunnan de Bharraich eile air an robh e eolach, agus b’ e raghainn ghasd’ e a chionn gu ’n robh an talamh fìor thorach, le maiseachd fhiadhaich, chreagach os cionn iomraidh. Bha ’n sud an uchd nam beanntan a bha cumail uapa oiteagan gaiseach na gailionn, aibhnichean is lochan loma lan bhreac is bhradan, fuarain is sruthan gun aireamh a’ ruith thairis air creagan is easan, le coille dhluth ghiuthais de chaochladh seorsa, cho math ri beith’ is maipeal, ’s ’n am measg sin, craobhan chaoran is shirist fhiadhaich, ’s iad uile sineadh a mach gu mullach nam beantann cho fad’ ’s a shealladh suil air gach taobh. Sin agaibh an Gleann Mor, agus b’e ’m parras e do shuil a’ Ghaidheil! An sud bha ghrian ag eiridh gu blathail, bha ’n t-earrach a’ tighinn trath, ’s na h-eoin a’ seinn gu binn. Bha na h-eileanaich sin sona sealbhachadh fialaidheachd. (Nicholson, October 21, 1943)

When the Hebrideans arrived on the shores of Cape Breton, they had a great lust for land. They had left little crofts behind, where they were under the yoke of laws and government, and when they came to a new country of remarkable size, free to all, they took possession of properties as large as those who were late coming to unsuitable places, or to the rear, could. Although Alasdair came to the country a few years after the first Gaels, there was nothing left for him but rear lands. He built a place in the Big Glen together with a handful of other natives of

Barra, with whom he was familiar, and it was an excellent choice since the ground was truly fertile, with a wild, rocky beauty, beyond description. It was the lap of the mountains that was keeping from them the withering blasts of storms, rivers and lakes teeming with trout and salmon, countless springs and streams running over the rocks and waterfalls, with woods thick with pine of different varieties, as good as birch and maple, and amid rowan and wild cherries, and them all spread out to the summit of the mountains as far as the eye could see on each side. That was the Big Glen, and it was a paradise in the eyes of the Gaels. There the sun rose warmly, the spring was coming early, and the birds singing sweetly. Those Hebrideans were happy enjoying bounty.

How should we reconcile depictions like this with the desperate portrait of the backlands painted by modern scholars such as Rusty Bittermann and Stephen Hornsby? Notwithstanding the influence nostalgia can play in some memories of the past, generalizations about the quality of land in the backlands are clearly problematic. Since this sobriquet refers to nearly all properties removed from major waterways or coastlines, the amount of the land involved is immense and diverse. Using a term employed by Barbara Rose Johnston, we also see how backlands have suffered from a “discourse of debasement” (Johnston 1995, 116). Mary Hufford uses this insight to better understand a comparable situation in Appalachia, where outside perceptions have devalued mountain land in order to rationalize both depopulation and industrial mining (1992).

This is not to suggest all farms in the backlands were good; descriptions from settlers and surveyors make that clear. We should also remember settlers and their descendants were accustomed to a low standard of land: the Outer Hebrides, from which many immigrants came, had some of the worst agricultural land in the British Isles (Hornsby 1986, 50). But some properties were undoubtedly fertile; their fields worked with pride for generations. In the end, historian Robert Morgan puts it this way: “Whether

it was pride or reality, there were also those who were so grateful for the land that the backlands were their heaven” (2008, 117).

Coming to full flower in works of praise composed by country bards such as Hugh F. MacKenzie and Malcolm Gillis, songs provides ample evidence of this localized pride. Many bards composed songs extolling the virtues of life in the backlands. Far from implying these areas were substandard—either in productivity or beauty—their songs paint a picture of communal satisfaction and natural abundance. Malcolm Gillis suggests visitors will be reinvigorated by a visit to the Rear, greeted by civility, kindness and songs in a community inhabited by people surrounded by leafy splendor who know no winter scarcity.

Though he was born at the end of the nineteenth century, Hugh F. MacKenzie drew on older poetic conventions to praise the natural beauty, pastoral attributes and generous residents of his home in Rear Christmas Island. Reminiscent of the great nature poetry of eighteenth century Gaelic Scotland, MacKenzie goes so far as to claim local residents consider the creation of the backlands to be one of the greatest works ever accomplished by God.

*'S truagh a Rìgh nach robh mi 'n dràs'd'
Air an Tulloch Àrd far am b'eòlach mi
Far na tric a shuidh mi air a' làr
Air Tìr an Àigh a' meòrachadh
Gun mi tuigsinn gu dé a' bhàigh
Thug air an Àrd Rìgh òrdachadh
Gur e an Cùl againn amhàin
An gnìomh a b'àill' a dheònaich e*

It's a shame that I am not at present on
the lofty hill I knew so well. Where I
often sat on the ground contemplating
this beautiful land, not knowing what
motivated God to command its being.

For us, the backlands (rear) is the single most lovely deed he wished. (Watson 2007)

Although poor land undoubtedly contributed to the construction of economic and social divisions in the region, research sometimes downplays the economic advantage enjoyed by early settlers. Later emigrants typically arrived with less and found it more difficult to become established. When an immigrant tax was imposed, some settlers were forced to work for several years in order to save enough money to purchase land, which was also more difficult to secure after a government policy change in 1832 (Campbell and MacLean 1974, 95).

Not only did this impact the kind of land immigrants acquired—driving them further into the interior and away from nascent transportation routes—it denied them an initial measure of security enjoyed by earlier immigrants. This affected their ability to withstand the impact of the potato blight, which arrived as many later immigrants—who usually settled in the backlands—were still struggling to establish a foothold in the forest. It also contributed to a pattern of working away from home that continues unabated today (Bittermann 1993).

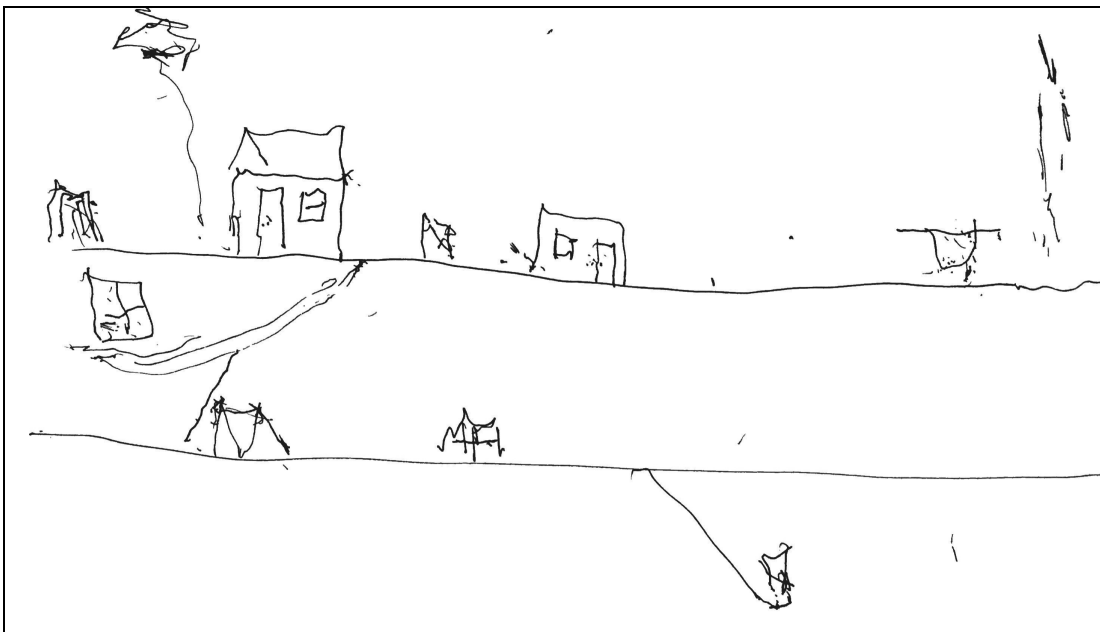
Financial insecurity during this critical period of the mid nineteenth century also made backland residents more susceptible to merchants who offered credit and loans. When debts came due, many settlers lost their farms. William McKeen, the principal merchant in Mabou, for example, accumulated huge tracts of land in this way. In a ten year period beginning during the mid-century potato famine, for example, McKeen took possession of twenty-three properties through court judgments and purchased another forty-eight by deeds (Samson 2008, 244).

McKeen and others followed a familiar pattern in North America. Historian John Stilgoe observes that “Storekeepers quickly learned the significance of their social and economic position; many entered politics on the strength of their front-porch and stove-side oratory, and many others accumulated great tracts of land as they foreclosed on mortgages, and so graduated into the order of wealthy planters” (1982, 73). Many backland families struggled for years to repay merchants in Nova Scotia. Though the credit they provided saved settlers during the blight, it also hobbled their ability to invest in their farms for years to come. No doubt this lack of investment was especially evident in the Rear, with long-lasting economic and social implications.

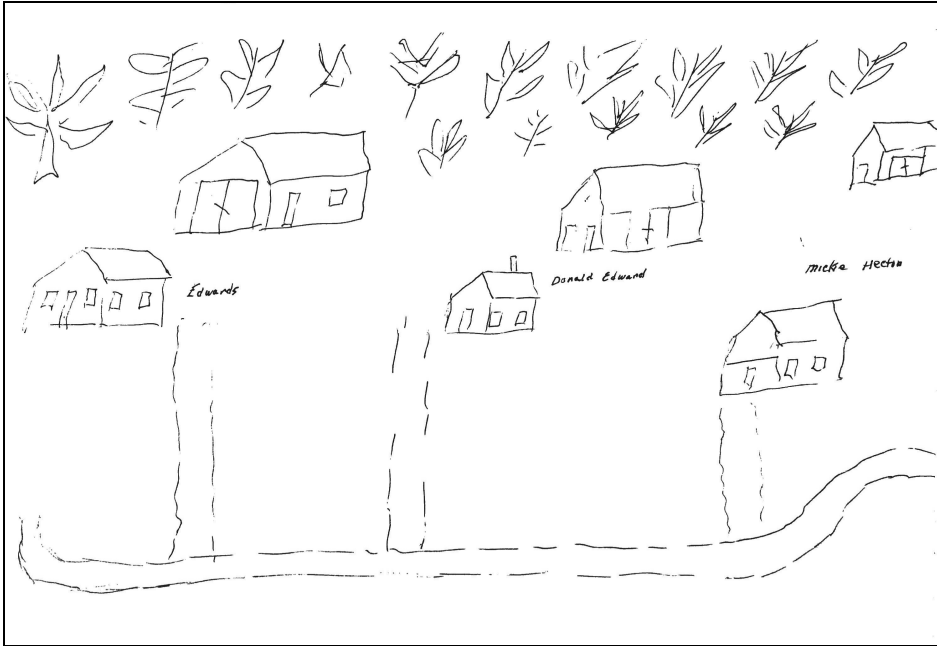
Allusions to financial hardships in the backlands are retained in inspiring stories recalled by descendants of those involved today. When a family in Rear Lake Ainslie was unable to pay their taxes, the sheriff took their only cow as payment. Since this was their only source of milk, it was a devastating loss. On hearing what had happened, a neighbour was incensed and went after the sheriff. Confronting him on the road to Inverness, John MacKay (*Iain Iain Ruaidh*) would not let the lawman pass until the cow was surrendered (Fraser nd, 108).

Standing up against this outside authority, MacKay sided with what was right instead of legal. His story continues to be told because it means something to people: his independent spirit and loyalty providing an aspirational model of behavior. Stories like this remind us how precarious life in the backlands was at times, and the spirit of unity and cooperation that made it possible. When residents highlight the sense of community that characterized the backlands they are also providing oblique criticism of the isolation that many rural residents face today.

Participants continually emphasize the strong sense of community that characterized these settlements and the prominent role communal work efforts played in their survival. This solidified bonds between neighbours that remained strong even after settlements began to dissolve, according to Catherine MacKenzie: “They were tight-knit communities. And they were always—they were almost like family. Even if they left their community and were living in different places. But they always kept in touch. There was a special bond between them” (MacKenzie 2014). Memory maps by former residents also appear to reflect this tight knit sense of community through their scale. Consider, for instance, the intimate lens Allan MacLeod and Michael Jack MacNeil chose to use when asked to draw the communities of their youths:



(8.1: Map by Allan MacLeod, New Boston)



(8.2 Map by Michael Jack MacNeil, Benacadie Glen)

While there were undoubtedly instances of social isolation and economic hardship in the backlands in the past, characterizing such a large and diverse group of settlements in this one way seems unfair. Nor are the social and economic distinctions between residents of the shore and backlands universal. Focusing on the economic and social history of one backland community, for instance, Robert MacKinnon shows it actually compared quite well with its frontland counterparts (1991,101). So, how do local residents explain the very real economic and social disparities between the Front and Rear?

Instead of faulting the people or properties in the backlands, local residents draw attention to the impact decisions made by outside authorities had on their ability to prosper. In this way, economic and social inequality is attributed to hegemonic forces beyond their control. Changes in transportation networks, for example, had a significant impact on life in many backland communities. According to Fr. Allan MacMillan, who

has spent decades researching the history of Boisdale, prosperous merchants with stores and wharfs located along Bras d'Or Lakes had a hand in convincing the government to move the main road closer to the water between Grand Narrows and Sydney, thus further isolating backland residents (MacMillan 2015). Jimmy Mick Sandy MacNeil heard this was one of the reasons his ancestors moved closer to the water in Benacadie Pond:

SM: Tha mi a' deanamh a-mach gu robh iad a' fuireach air mullach a' bheinn.

JM: Feadhainn dhiubh. Àite còmhnaidh.

SM: An e sin a reusan a bha iad a' fuireach thall a' sin?

JM: Um hm. Air sàilleibh, far an robh mise a' fuireach, bha i cho cas. Ach, m'athair, mhubh e a-staigh, 's thog e taigh, an roinn dhan lot.

SM: Carson a mhubh e a-staigh?

JM: Goirid dhan rathad. (MacNeil 2008)

SM: I gather they lived on top of the mountain.

JM: Some of them. Flat land.

SM: Is that the reason they were living over there?

JM. Um hm. Because, where I was living, it was so steep. But my father, he moved in, he built a house, in this part of the lot.

SM: Why did he move?

JM: Closer to the road.

The construction of a railway along the coastline had a similar effect. According to oral tradition, during the latter part of the nineteenth century houses were moved from higher elevations—usually located nearer the backlands—in order to gain better access to improved transportation links along the shore:

Agus an uair sin, nuair bha iad a' togail a' 'railroad' agus thàinig an 'government surveyed' rathad, shìos air aghaidh a' chladaich, b'fheudar dhaibhsan an uair sin na taighean a thoirt anuas taobh a' rathaid. Agus sin mar a thàinig na taighean anuas a' rathad. (MacNeil 2003)

And then, when they were building the railroad and the government's surveyed road came down to the shorefront, they then had to bring the houses down. They were brought down to the side of the road. And that is how the houses arrived at the road.

To be sure, the pull these transportation networks exerted on residents reconfigured local notions of isolation and centrality. Not only were houses brought closer to roads and railways, those same transportation networks brought towns and cities closer to residents—at least perceptually. The social consequences were far-reaching. Donald MacMullan, who lived in Rear Beaver Cove, Cape Breton County, composed a song during the period that lampooned local housewives who shopped and travelled away from home. His song hints at the freedom new transportation options granted women in the country—who now required only a train or ferry ticket to travel to town for the day—and how these developments upset the status quo. MacMullan depicts the women as vain and irresponsible for adopting city fashions and neglecting their families at home (See MacDonald and MacDonald 1992, 28-31). Other bards looked to roads and railroads as their economic salvation.

In addition to altering the physical landscape of communities and restructuring local referents, these developments reflect the expanding role outside forces would play in local fortunes; an influence that would benefit some residents while depriving others. A good example comes from St. Anne's Bay. According to local tradition, a clerical directive intended to cool tensions over fishing grounds had unintended consequences for inland residents. Donnie MacDonald, who was raised by his grandparents in Tarbot, Victoria County, several miles removed from the shore, explains:

Nuair thòisich iad ag iasgach air a' Chladach a Tuatha, agus bho Bhaile nan Gall sios gu Beinn Smokey, bhiodh na daoine a' sabaid mu dheidhinn far a robh iad ag iasgach. Ach co-dhiubh, na boireanaich a bha air a' chladach, fhuair iad am ministear agus bha coinneachadh mòr aca còmhla ris. Agus bha iad ag innse dha gum b'fheudar dhaibh rudeigin a dheanamh airson a chur crìochnachadh air na sabaid a bha na daoine a' deanamh agus bha a h-uile daoine a' tighinn dhachaigh, mòran dhiubh a' tighinn dhachaidh, goirt agus làimhean briste is stuth mar sin. Ach co dhiubh, chaidh ministear mun cuairt agus thuirt e ris na

daoine a bha ag iasgach gum bu chòir dhan a h-uile daoine a thighinn dhan eaglais Latha na Sàbaid, gu robh seirbheis mhór gu bhi aigesan. Agus thàinig iad dhan eaglais chuir e lagh dhaibh, dhan a h-uile daoine a bha air a' Chladach a Tuath gum bhiodh iad ag iasgach.... a-mach bho 'n talamh a' bh'aca. Agus cha bhiodh iad ag iasgach ann an àite duine eile. (MacDonald 2016)

When they started fishing on the North Shore, between Englishtown and Cape Smokey, the people would be fighting over where they were fishing. But anyway, the women who were on the shore, they got the minister and they had a big meeting with him. And they were telling him that they should put an end to the fighting that the people were doing and everybody was coming home, many of them were coming home, sore and broken hands and stuff like that. But anyway, the minister went around and he said to the people that were fishing that everybody should come to church on the Sabbath, that he would have a big service. And they came to church and he put the law to them, to everyone who was on the North Shore, that they would be fishing...out from their land. And they wouldn't be fishing in any one else's place.

Following this directive, men only fished the water directly in front of their land.

While this ended disputes over prime fishing grounds, it deepened social divisions since it deprived backland residents access to the fisheries, an important alternate food source and income. Only within the last fifty years was this informal prohibition broken, when a resident of the backlands refused to recognize its authority and fished where he wanted. When participation in the fisheries waned, it was reinstated.

Besides reinforcing what Wagner and Davis have described about the worldview maintained by Scottish Gaels in Nova Scotia—one fixated on land—this material highlights the powerful position clergy occupied in the region, an authority that extended over land and sea. Equally influential, but less obvious, is the force women deployed behind the scenes. More importantly, the account underscores the role hegemonic powers have played in extending and imposing concepts of private ownership and its associated privileges. After all, the ocean was once seen as unconquered; free to all. The minister's

decree ensured that the water, like the land, would be carved up by invisible lines, divided into territories that recognized some and excluded others.

The increased economic opportunities available to shoreline residents had important repercussions for communities throughout the region. Jimmy MacKenzie lived his whole life in Rear Big Beach, Cape Breton County. After claiming economic differences between parish residents were negligible, MacKenzie added that “*Bha iad ag obair barrach, ma d’fhaodte, a-muigh ‘s a’ Chùl. Na feadhainn a bha aig an aghaidh, cha robh iad ag obair cho cruaidh.* (They were working more, maybe, out in the Rear. The ones who were in the front, they weren’t working as hard) (MacKenzie 2011). Though few residents were financially prosperous, those along the shore were in a better position to supplement their income with other forms of employment. Neil MacKinnon, who was raised in Loon Lake, a now abandoned community in the backlands of Boisdale, explains how this impacted social hierarchies:

The way it happened – when the railroad went through, there was a certain number of the farmers along the railroad line that could work on the railroad. And some of them had political clout, they got permanent jobs...if you got a permanent job at the time, well, you had a steady income. Which was never known before to the farmer. And of course, that meant that those people in the rear areas where I was, and beyond, were only sort of hewers of wood and drawers of water for the front people. (Caplan 1988, 131)

Though less pronounced today, some backland residents continue to feel spurned by those in power. Due to a dwindling population, essential services are sometimes neglected in the Rear. One elderly friend, frustrated about a lack of road maintenance, recently asked me, “What do they think we are back here, second-class Indians?” While such a pejorative statement is clearly offensive, it also reveals the degree to which some

residents continue to feel marginalized, containing as it does tacit recognition of the discrimination faced by First Nations.

Contemporary residents confirm the existence of social divisions based on geography, though not surprisingly those from the backlands are more likely to bring them up. Even when they were within walking distance of the main road and shore, backland residents were considered by some to be poorer and less sophisticated than their shoreline neighbours. Despite attending church and doing business in the Front, Martha Ramey recalls an unequal relationship with its residents, “*Uell, muinntir a’ Chùil, bha an fheadhainn a bha a-staigh air a’ cladach a’ smaontinn gu robh iad na b’fheàrr na sinne.*” (Well, the people from the Rear, the ones who were in on the shore were thinking they were better than we were)(Ramey 2012).

This perceived inferiority provided a rationale for marginalization. In the following exchange between lifelong friends in Christmas Island, the personal consequences of this social hierarchy are made clear. Though they were raised along the shore, Cathie MacKinnon and Catherine MacNeil were sensitive to how some people treated residents from the Rear:

Cathie: Ach nuair bha thu a’ fuireach air a’ Chùil, bha iad a’ smaontinn gu faodadh iad rud sam bith a chantail riut.

Catherine: Cha chreid mi nach robh iad cho math dheth ri duine sam bith.

Cathie: Bha. Bha iad brùideil. (MacKinnon and MacNeil 2011)

Cathie: And when you lived in the Rear, they were thinking they could say anything to you.

Catherine: I believe they were as well off as anyone else.

Cathie: They were. They were brutal.

Importantly, economic and social mobility had a linguistic counterpart. English was associated with material progress, social status and prosperity. As residents began to assimilate, Gaelic was often maintained better in the backlands than in the Front. Fr.

Malcolm MacDonnell, who was raised several kilometers from the shore in Hillsdale, told me this was the case in Judique, Inverness County, where shoreline residents adopted English well before their backland counterparts. When we spoke several years ago, Fr. MacDonnell described the social divisions characterized by this linguistic rupture, noting that: “*Bha muinntir a’ chladaich beagan àrdanach* (The people of the shore were somewhat pretentious) (MacDonnell 2002).⁶

According to Martha Ramey, the growing distance —linguistic and economic— between shoreline residents and those in the Rear meant backland residents were subjected to ridicule for speaking Gaelic: “*Bhiodh iad a’ magadh oirnn cuideachd. Bhiodh iad a’ magadh air a’ Ghàidhlig. Yes. Bhiodh iad a’ magadh air a’ Ghàidhlig nan cluinneadh iad sinn ga bruidhinn*” (They would be mocking us too. They would be mocking the Gaelic. Yes. They would be mocking the Gaelic if they heard us speaking it)(Ramey 2012). Social divisions demarcated by geography were thus exacerbated by linguistic ones. Today, however, a growing interest in Gaelic and its local poetic tradition provides a point of pride for modern backland residents, including Roddie Farrell:

So, there were certain things going on there, where they felt that they maybe have cause to feel a little more important than us yokels in the back. But I don’t think I recall any bards coming from along the water, whereas in the backlands we certainly had them. So, I think there were many things to compensate! (Farrell 2015).

While geographical and social divisions between the shore and backlands were never so severe as to impede friendly relations between inhabitants—and the degree to

⁶ Of course, as Fr. MacDonnell humorously recalled, the transition from Gaelic to English was not without its hurdles: “*Ach, mar a thuirt m’athair, “Chaill iad a’ Ghàidhlig, ‘s gu dearra fhèin, chan eil a’ Bheurla aca ro mhath.*” (But, as my father said, “They lost the Gaelic, and to be sure, their English isn’t too good) (MacDonnell 2002).

which these divisions were perceived varied from community to community and individual to individual—fieldwork with contemporary tradition bearers shows how socially constructed perceptions of land affect people in very real ways. More importantly, the development of socially constructed divisions within a natural landscape, and their social connotations, demonstrates the extent to which Scottish Gaels came to identify with specific areas of the landscape they inhabited in Nova Scotia. As we have seen, these connections sometimes extended beyond a sense of parochial pride. In the next chapter, I explore attitudes to land ownership in Gaelic Nova Scotia, including the possessive attitude to land historical commentators often assigned to settlers.

Chapter Nine

Attitudes towards land and land ownership

Given their history of dispossession, Highland settlers likely derived a special sense of security and independence from the ability to own land in Nova Scotia. Songs composed during the settlement period repeatedly reference land ownership as a major advantage of emigration. The historical record is equally clear. Consider, for example, the Glenaladale colonists in Prince Edward Island. They were lured to the island as part of an emigration scheme led by John MacDonald, the laird of Glenaladale. After purchasing an enormous tract of land on the island, MacDonald offered his clansmen three-thousand year leases, a measure of security unprecedented in the Highlands (Lawson 1991, 35). The land was fertile and provided immigrants with the chance to recreate the traditional land holding structure of Gaelic Scotland. But as word spread that they could secure their own land in Nova Scotia, many immigrants abandoned the scheme and moved across the Northumberland Strait. Lord Selkirk described the situation in 1803: “The old Settlers of all descriptions are averse to the tenure even on perpetual leases & anxious to procure lands on absolute sale, so much so as to abandon lands held on lease tho’ they have made considerable clearings, & to go & begin again upon wild land on purchase” (Selkirk 1958, 7-8)

According to historian Tony MacKenzie, emigration had effected in Highlanders, “a radical transformation in their attitude toward land ownership. The old tradition of landholding in common had rendered them vulnerable to the treachery of chiefs and the greed of free-booters that had robbed them of their lands in Scotland. In the new country they were committed to private ownership” (MacKenzie 2003, 113). Stephen Hornsby makes the long-

term consequences clear, writing that: "...the very different relations to property on Cape Breton had produced a strikingly dissimilar society to that of Western Scotland" (1986, 314)

Perhaps an ability to own land also deepened a desire to accumulate and protect that property. According to contemporary observers, Scottish Gaels were unusually possessive of land in early nineteenth-century Nova Scotia (Campbell and MacLean 1974, 42). Judge George Marshall claimed civic improvements were even hindered by settlers reluctant to surrender a small portion of their land. Travelling between Broad Cove and Margaree in 1827, an area settled almost exclusively by Scottish Gaels, Marshall recorded that,

...the inhabitants in agreeing upon the present line of the road felt desirous of yielding as little as possible of their improved or improvable land and therefore in many places have left the road so near to the steep banks of the shore and carried their fences so low down that sufficient room is not left for the making of a good road in addition to which the land for the purpose is not so good as it is higher up and the present line is more circuitous that it needs to be. (Marshall 1827)

Joseph Howe also described this attitude towards private property, suggesting the social and historical background of the Gaels made them inordinately possessive of land in Nova Scotia. According to Howe, this characteristic impeded their social and economic advancement as it blinded them to the new realities of life in the colony:

A curious feature in the character of the Highland population, spread over the eastern parts of the Province, is the extravagant desire they cherish to purchase large quantities of land....we have known many instances of serious embarrassment on the part of those who once possessed a handsome capital, and many of the poorer settlers seriously injure their prospects, by curtailing the means necessary to the successful cultivation of the land they have in their over-anxiety to make a further purchase. They will toil night and day—spend as little as possible—and live upon the commonest fare, until a sum of money is saved, either sufficient to buy an adjoining tract, or to pay the fees required to get a grant from the Crown. (Howe 1973, 152-153)

Perhaps for this reason settlers were remarkably vocal about real and perceived violations of their property rights in colonial Nova Scotia. Writing in 1828, Justice Chipmann noted that one mainland region was especially burdened with legal cases of this nature, a situation he attributed to the cultural origins of its residents: “The class of people here living are chiefly Highlanders... warm in their tempers, stern in defending their rights, and obstinate in resenting supposed or real wrongs and injuries; when they get to law they do not easily give back” (Quoted in Dunn 1991, 33). Rev. James MacGregor also complained about quarrels over land—even among the first wave of Highland immigrants to settle in Nova Scotia (MacKay 1980, 201).

Inaccurate surveys and lax prosecution of violators only exacerbated this problem. Because some properties were never completely surveyed in the backlands, for instance, they created “a legacy of claims and counter claim to the present-day” (Hornsby 1986, 233). Squatters could sometimes be violently opposed to surveys, fearing they would force them from land they claimed as their own. Stephen Hornsby relates an account of a surveyor working in Red Islands, Richmond County who was threatened by a squatter, “armed with a bludgeon” who warned that “the first person who would enter... his fenced fields for the purpose of making a survey would never leave these fields alive” (1986, 87). Summing up the situation, Joseph Howe observed that, “The violence with which the Highland immigrants disputed property rights astonished their more peaceful neighbours who could not understand the Highlanders’ lust for land” (Quoted in Dunn 1991, 33).

This attachment to land was not restricted to settlers, nor were its social effects always so obvious. Writing during the first part of the twentieth century, William

Cameron argued that a tendency to accumulate large tracts of land, and hold on to them as long as possible, was hobbling the agricultural industry and exacerbating rural depopulation in Antigonish County (Cameron 1999, 193-194). Decades later Peter MacKenzie Campbell took up this point again arguing a reluctance to part with land contributed to rural depopulation in Cape Breton:

Perhaps it was the satisfaction of being, at long last, outright owners of the land they tilled, that injected into many of our Highland people that hesitancy to pass on their lands when they could no longer work them, or to make provisions for their disposal after that had passed away. This failure led to serious consequences, many would-be farmers leaving for other parts rather than fritter away their years on land to which they couldn't obtain titles of ownership. Not all settlers or their descendants were of this type, but the percentage who did think they could take their lands to heaven with them was large enough to cause serious dislocations in their communities. Much land reverted to its primeval state due to this tendency among an otherwise good and noble people. (Campbell 1978, 25)

Research indicates this was a common complaint. While lamenting the number of young people who were leaving rural districts for work in urban centers, Jonathan G. MacKinnon wrote the following in 1903:

Ged tha na fearainn ann an iomadh àite air an dearmad, chan eil iad air an creic no a' tuiteam an làmhnan mhuinntir eile. Mar seo tha gach àite bha air a thogail le Gàidheil an toiseach ann an seilbh Ghàidheil fhathast, agus bithidh gus an dealaich riutha an gràdh is an ceangal ri dachaigh na h-òige a bha riamh fuaighte ri nàdar a' Ghàidheil.

Although the lands in many places are neglected, they have not been sold and are not falling into the hands of other peoples. Thus, every place that was cultivated by Gaels initially is still in the possession of Gaels, and they will be until they [the owners] relinquish the devotion for and bond to the childhood home that was ever intrinsic to the Gaelic constitution. (Newton 2015, 243)

One resident of Big Pond, Angus MacNeil, who died in 1871, wanted so much for his land to stay in the family, he made it a condition of his will, writing, "I also revoke and order that none of my real estate shall be sold to any person or persons, but to members

of my family” (MacNeil 1871). In a sermon given in Christmas Island in 1915, Rev.

Donald MacAdam lamented the number of farms that had been abandoned over the past generation, laying some of the blame on parents who waited too long to sign over land to their children. The inability to secure title to the family farm before their parents died, he argued, diminished their marriage prospects and encouraged them to leave the area:

Gun teagamh bhiodh e amaideach do pharantan an cuid dh’n t-saoghal gu leir a thoirt do mhac no do nighean agus iad fhein fhagail falamh, ach tha cuimse anns gach ni, agus bu choir dhaibh cumail nan cuimhne nach e trillean idir a tha nan cuide cloinne a fh’fheumas roinn a’s fhearr d’am beatha a thoirt seachd d’am parantan gun phaigheagh sam bith air a shon ach duil ri ruidegin an deaghaidh am bais.

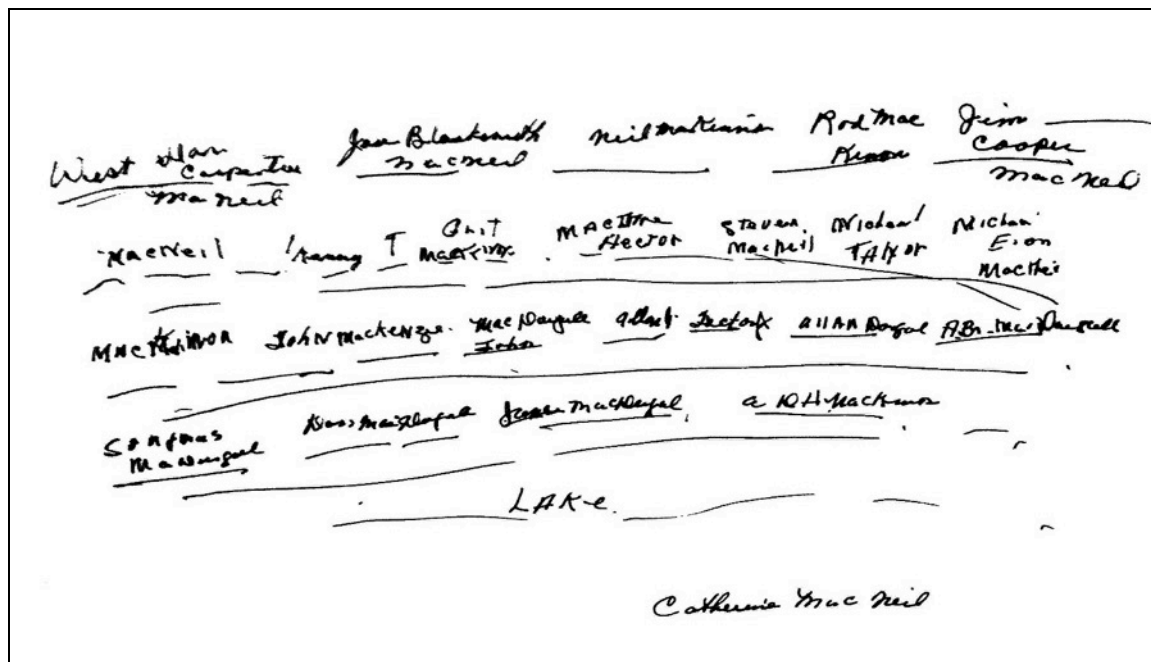
Undoubtedly it would be foolish on the part of parents to give all they possessed to either son or daughter, and leave themselves destitute. But there is moderation in all things, and they ought to remember that their children are not slaves, who must give the best part of their lives to their parents without any return but the expectation of something after their death. (MacAdam 1915, 23)

While area residents are quick to point out the many good qualities their progenitors possessed—including their hospitality and cooperative spirit—they also recall a widespread desire to control and accumulate land. Flora MacIsaac summed up the attitude neatly when we spoke: “The more land the better, that was kind of the motto” (MacIsaac 2015).

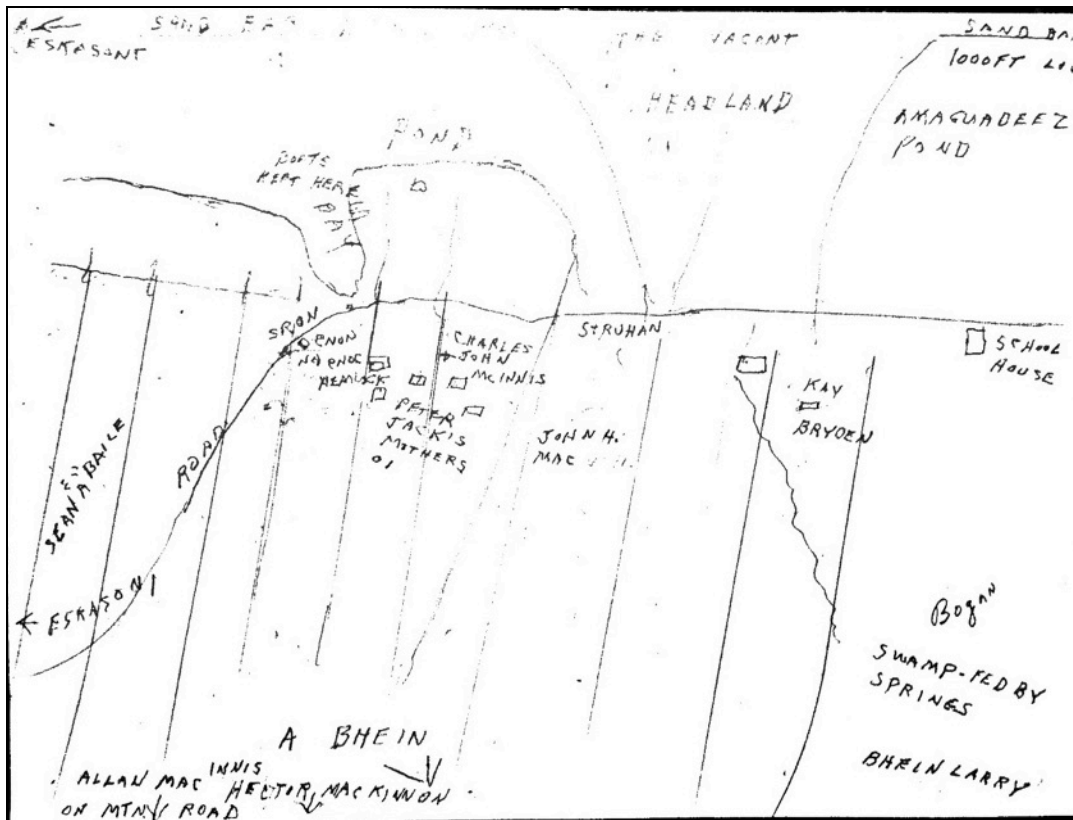
Of course, the practical and perceptual value of property is obvious. Land sustained families—with farmland, firewood and timber. But it also provided a measure of social prestige, independence and security for settlers and their descendants. Charles Dunn wagered that “Only those who know the pioneer’s history can appreciate how dearly the Highlander cherished the land for which he had suffered the sorrows of exile, of loneliness, and of toil” (1991, 33).

Modern tradition bearers reiterate the symbolic value land possessed to their progenitors. ‘Wild’ Allan Bonnar told me that when his great-grandfather took possession of a local piece of property, his father told him, “You got the land now. You’re a person. You’re on the map. You’re somebody” (Bonnar 2016).

Because land held such significance, residents were understandably protective of their properties. Imaginary lines drawn by itinerant land surveyors assumed powerful and enduring significance in their lives. Henry Glassie has described how boundaries, real or imposed, form an important part of the sense of place maintained by residents in rural Ireland (1982, 69). The psychic impact of such divisions has been described by James Kunstler who observed that, "...the grid institutionalized the trend toward scattered farms, rather than agricultural villages, giving physical expression to the powerful myth that only lone individuals mattered in America" (1993, 30).



(9.1: Map of Christmas Island, drawn by Catherine MacNeil)



(9.2 Map of Castle Bay, drawn by Alex MacDonald)

During this research, participants continually noted the critical role survey lines played in shaping the mental landscape of Gaelic Nova Scotia. Several even replicated these lines on the memory maps they drew of their communities. Alex MacDonald used a ruler to more accurately reflect their locations in Castle Bay while Catherine MacNeil made their presence clear by writing a series of names within an imaginary grid devoid of other landmarks or images in Christmas Island.

Interviews were equally instructive. Recalling his childhood in Loch Lomond, in the interwar period, Kenny Morrison claimed property lines were very important to residents, adding, “Oh yes, they were very jealous of their properties” (Morrison 2014). Martha Ramey painted a similar picture of Rear Big Pond, where residents avoided walking on neighbouring properties whenever possible: “Heaven help you if you went on

anybody else's... You'd have to be careful" (Ramey 2014). While not all residents were so protective of their land, some considered even minor infringements an affront.

Importantly, several people attributed this protective attitude to the cultural origins of those involved. When asked whether people were mindful of property lines during the first part of the twentieth century in North River, Victoria County, Archie MacDonald responded "Oh my heavens, yes! Yes, God, yes, you were lucky—that's my line, that's your line. Scotch people...they were very fussy on that you know. Oh yes, they had their own line" (MacDonald 2014). A similar picture emerged in Antigonish County. After claiming land disputes were among the rare sources of conflict during her youth in Arisaig before the war, Catherine MacKenzie said:

Yes, that could be a bone of contention. I think that sort of filtered down maybe from the ancestors. Land, property was so important to them. In Scotland, they owned nothing. They were living on somebody else's land. This business of owning land was very important. And if somebody thought that somebody else was encroaching on their property they'd have something to say about it. (MacKenzie 2014)

Keith Basso and others have argued that the most interesting claims people make are those they make about themselves (1996, 37). No doubt this argument could be extended to groups as well. For that reason it seems significant that local residents readily attribute twentieth century attitudes to land to historical events that occurred generations ago. Not only does this rationalize a strain of individualism present in communities otherwise typified by reciprocal work relationships and communal cooperation, it allows residents to imagine their predecessors in ways that counter their lack of institutional and social power. Having known the indignity of dispossession in Scotland, Gaels are depicted as proud, independent and fierce defenders of land in Nova Scotia.

Local residents also have a fixed sense of what rightful land ownership should resemble. This understanding transcends legal obligations and reinforces popular notions about the dangers of violating ethical norms. Though informal, these expectations emerge in conversation and oral narrative. Consider, for instance, how Jessie MacDonald describes emigration and settlement in the province.

JM: Rinn iad mòran, poidhle do obair! Dh'feumadh iad. Cha robh sìon ann. 'S cha dug iad a-nall mòran. Chaidh iad a chur—cha do rinn pàirt dhiubh idir ann, fhuair iad am bàs mun d' ràinig iad—chaidh iad a chur ann am bàta is chuir iad a-mach air an t-uiste, 's tog rithe! Bha siod mosach.

SM: An e sin a' reusan a dh'fhalbh iad?

JM: Chaidh iad a' chuir a-mach. Thug iad fèidh is fhuair iad [JM: They did a pile of work! They had to. There was nothing. And they didn't take much across. They were put—some of them never made it, they died before they arrived—they were put into a boat and put out to sea, take off! That was cruel.

SM: Is that why they left?

JM: They were put out. They got deer and they got) deer and what else? Sheep! That was in their place. There was a song that was in. The deer and the sheep were put in their place and they were drove off of their land. Well, I don't think the fellas, the ones that did that would have much luck... Cha do glèidheadh iad mòran le siod a dheanamh (They wouldn't gain much in doing that.) (MacDonald 2015)

In many ways the account is not unusual, stressing as it does the physical hardships endured by settlers, the challenge they confronted upon their arrival in the region and the cruelty of their dispossession from Scotland. MacDonald also notes how sheep and deer came to replace Gaels in the Highlands, a detail she recalled hearing in a song.⁷

Importantly however, her account concludes by noting those responsible for this injustice

⁷ Given its historic popularity in Nova Scotia, the song in question is likely *Fuadach nan Gaidheal* (The Expulsion of the Highlanders). Speaking to John Lorne Campbell, Rev. Duncan J. Rankin called it “our national anthem over here” (Campbell 1999, 13). Composed by Henry Whyte decades after large scale emigration to Nova Scotia ended, the song uses a romantic and sentimental style to describe the Highland Clearances. Though it became popular with tradition bearers in the province, its style and content is uncharacteristic of older compositions brought over with emigrants in both content and style.

were unlikely to have profited from it. Though the remark was made in passing, its meaning is worth exploring.

Local residents regularly suggest that land taken by unethical means leads to misfortune. Jessie MacDonald implies as much when she says those responsible for depriving Highlanders of their ancestral lands were unlikely “to have much luck” or “gain much in doing that” (MacDonald 2015). Whether implicit or explicit, this expectation underscores narrative after narrative in Gaelic Nova Scotia.

Brothers Gary and Barry George provide a good example. According to local tradition, a local settler was granted an especially large piece of land bordering the Bras d’Or Lakes after submitting a fraudulent land petition to colonial authorities in Sydney. Though he expected the land would allow his descendants to live in ease and contentment, his sons died early and his heirs quarreled over the property. As the original grant was divided, misfortune and conflict reigned within the family. Ultimately, according to Gary, the large property the settler claimed, “didn’t seem to benefit him any” (George 2015). Area residents drew lessons from the situation that continue to resonate with their descendants today, as the brothers make clear:

GG: There was always a lot of fighting over that. And there was bad luck, I guess, because of that on that property.

BG: That’s why they tell the story.....

BG: It was like a story handed down to illustrate what happens if you cheat, I guess. Because you heard of different ones squabbling over land, or houses. There’s never any luck with that.

GG: Yah, any fighting over land, there never seems to be any luck with it at all. (George 2015)

While this is a particularly obvious example of this principle at work, its influence can be seen in other narratives told in the region. Consider, for instance, a legend from nearby Benacadie, Cape Breton County. Roddie Farrell sets up the account:

We have a place just behind my house over here: Bryden's property. The guy who bought the property got a land grant for it. He was away, working in the Klondike, and came back and he had enough gold to build his new place, to buy his property and be pretty comfortable. That house was finished, top to bottom. Plaster of Paris. No other house—I doubt even if the glebe house was finished as well as that was. And yet, anybody who stayed there didn't have a very good night—because there was a haunting going on there. (Farrell 2015)

According to oral tradition, in order to build on the land the miner had to evict a poor widow from the property. As she was led away, the elderly woman put a curse on the land, vowing that no one would ever enjoy a peaceful rest there again. Despite its impressive nature, the house had to be abandoned. Those who stayed there overnight were plagued by noises and visions. As it fell into disrepair, the property took on a new life. Young people would stay in the house to test their mettle against the curse and, according to Farrell, “many, many people who professed those beliefs to be bullshit couldn't stay there” (Farrell 2015). Today, the forest has reclaimed the property and only the legend remains. But legends are more than mere stories: they persist because “they embody undying states of mind” (Allport 1946, 164).

Supporting the proposal that unethical land ownership leads to misfortune, the account clearly conveys the cruelty of eviction and dispossession. According to Fr. Allan MacMillan, these were fears deeply embedded in generations of former residents: “They had this fear of losing the land—of being dispossessed. That was so much in them, you know... there was that great fear of being dispossessed again...” (MacMillan 2015). Perhaps for that reason, according to historian Tony MacKenzie, “Land for them and

their successors became an obsession” (2003, 123). Roddie Farrell also sees a moral lesson embedded in the story: “You never, never take advantage or treat someone badly because you don’t know what the repercussions are going to be” (Farrell 2015). Importantly, the curse in this story was not directed at the owners, but at the land. If the old widow could not enjoy the property, it seems, nobody could.

A similar theme underscores a story from Meat Cove. According to local legend, strange noises, including rattling chains, used to be heard in a secluded spot near the community. People also saw mysterious figures lurking in the shadows and sensed the presence of the supernatural. While he suspects the story is “more folklore than anything” local resident Derrick MacLellan was quick to point out its longevity within the local narrative tradition: “Well, it was passed down from my grandparents, and other elders of the community, and it was probably passed down to them” (MacLellan 2015). In the following, MacLellan explains why an area still known as *Sloc a’ Bhocain* (Hollow of the Spook) is considered haunted:

There was a dispute at one time over that property. And it was between siblings. It was more of a dispute between a couple of brothers. And they could never reach an agreement who was going to settle on to it or own it.

Like I believe, there was, supposedly, blood spilt. And there was a curse put on to it that no one would ever live on to this property. And no one ever have.

So, I don’t know if there’s truth to it or is it people just didn’t want to be associated with it, right? But you know, you hear many of those stories, right? (MacLellan 2015)

Like the previous legend, this one is rooted in a dispute over land. And once again, the curse was directed at land, not people. In this way its impact extended beyond individuals, beyond families, and beyond a specific time period. Fixed on land, the curse ensured no one would ever be able to live there. Not only does this imply a possessive attitude towards land, it suggests a desire to control it forever.

In the end, both these legends are best understood within an appropriate cultural and historical context. In his research on folksongs, Barre Toelken describes such work as textual decoding; the need to learn how singers and their audience interpret the metaphors employed in their songs (1996, 33). Erika Friedl goes so far as to suggest a “shared cultural background is a prerequisite for a successful storytelling event. If this background is not basically the same for narrator and listener, the tales told by the one can be expected to ‘mean’ different things to the other” (1975, 127). While this may be a step too far, knowledge of the larger contextual issues at play is certainly important to developing an understanding of the meaning stories have within a given community. This includes the idea that taking land by unethical means results in misfortune, and that disputes over property lead to the same. These legends exploit these principles while simultaneously validating them. Local residents may not see land as the principal theme in these legends, but their awareness of its local significance undoubtedly shapes how they interpret them.

In otherwise cohesive communities, conflicts over land were not uncommon. Thinking back on his childhood in Earltown, Colchester County, Second World War veteran Donald Sutherland recalled that many squabbles focused on land (Sutherland 2014). Alex MacDonald, a contemporary, painted a similar picture of Castle Bay noting that, “There were a lot of fights over property in some places. Some people thought they owned the whole community” (MacDonald 2014). When asked whether his childhood neighbours were protective of their properties in Benacadie, Roddie Farrell responded:

Oh heavens yes. Extremely protective. But not practical. Because let’s say you had the property next to me. You knew your boundaries and I knew mine. But we wouldn’t mark them. You knew the exact tree to go to, or a certain little mound, or a big rock that was in the corner or something. And you wouldn’t tell anybody

where that was. You knew it. That was your information. And if I was out cutting in the woods and somebody wanted to cut on my property, you know, the next door neighbor would be there watching him like a hawk. But there were no blaze lines or anything. And you know, you say, what's the sense of this? (Farrell 2015)

According to Farrell, the answer likely relates to knowledge. In a community where privacy and isolation was uncommon, private intelligence was a precious commodity. Representing a sort of social capital, the ability to discern invisible divisions between properties made it possible for one neighbour to hold something over another—or capitalize on their ignorance. After all, any uncertainty regarding property lines could be manipulated to the advantage of the more knowledgeable neighbour.

Carlie MacNeil, a middle aged resident of MacKinnon's Harbour, was told that fence lines near his home may not accurately reflect property lines since some former residents were inclined to push their boundaries beyond what they legally owned: "Whenever you're putting in a new fence you always go over a foot. To gain it. A foot was a major thing! He said that was going on all the time" (MacNeil 2015). Though sensitive, such claims are not uncommon. Fr. Allan MacMillan provides an example:

I often remember hearing of one particular row between two families. And they were cousins as well. But they kept moving the fence this way and the others would move it back, you know. And they fought over the land for years and years and years. But whether that had anything to do with just this idea that they didn't want to lose any of what they had finally acquired—of course, this was not the pioneering generation but the following one, or the one after that. I remember my father talking about. He'd laugh and he'd say, they're all dead now! (MacMillan 2015)

Though personal and temporal distance permits people to recall such events with humour, clashes could sometimes escalate into serious disputes. This was particularly true during the pioneering era. Despite a land grant recognizing his service during the American Revolution, Samuel Campbell was unable to prevent neighbours from

trespassing on his land and taking away timber in Richmond County. Two families even started clearing, fencing and cultivating his land, likely waiting for the aged pioneer to die to take the rest (Hornsby 1986, 89).

Squatters were even more susceptible to such abuse. John McPherson settled along the Mabou River in Inverness County. After several years, the former soldier had improved enough land to sustain his family. Unfortunately, his neighbour soon started a campaign of intimidation aimed at expanding his own land. John MacDonald destroyed fences and forests on the adjoining property, going so far as to plant crops there. Without a land grant, MacDonald likely suspected the law could do nothing to protect his neighbour. Fortunately, a local magistrate was so appalled by the situation he requested the colonial authorities issue a grant to MacPherson (Hornsby 1986, 90). In the end, Barry George may have summed up the situation best. When asked whether previous generations were possessive of land, the Christmas Island resident quipped, “They knew how to fight over it!” (George 2015).

Some scholars, including Douglas Campbell and Ray MacLean, have interpreted the longevity and animosity of some of these disputes within a historical framework: “The importance attached to land by those who had never formally owned any, and the retentive memory of Highlanders in regards to personal slights, kept such bitterness alive” (1974, 42). Many tradition bearers also allude to the fact immigrants lacked title to ancestral lands in Scotland to explain their attachment to property in Nova Scotia. Fr. MacMillan suggests as much when he reminds us those squabbling over a fence line in his account were not pioneers—nor even the children of pioneers—but still possessed

“this idea that they didn’t want to lose any of what they had finally acquired”

(MacMillan 2015).

But there was also an excitement in these disputes that likely appealed to some residents—what Roddie Farrell calls “the old badness surfacing” that allowed residents to “get a little feud going, make things interesting for a while” (Farrell 2015). Certainly, the vehemence with which some residents defended their properties produced captivating stories. In the following, Archie Kerr recounts how his grandfather, born in the mid nineteenth century, confronted a neighbour accused of cutting logs on his property in Big Intervale:

If somebody infringed on your property, they were told about it. There was a story that they told about my grandfather. My grandfather had a hot temper—MacDonald. And his neighbor—my grandfather by the way had a large farm, he had four-hundred acres, a lot of woodland—and one of his neighbors was cutting some logs and my grandfather discovered he was in on his property or at least he thought he was. A couple of feet, you know.

And he wrote on one of the big stumps, “No more Harris man to cut lumber in this area.” Because this MacKinnon fella came from Harris in Scotland. And he referred to him as a Harris man.

And anyway, MacKinnon was going by one day and they got into a little conversation over the fence.

And my grandfather said, well, he said, “The MacDonalds were pretty notable people” he said,

“I had a brother who was a minister and I had a brother who was a blacksmith.”

And he said, “I’m a carpenter, I’m a fairly good carpenter, what did the MacKinnons do?”

“Root the ground,” he said, “Any pig could do that!” (Kerr 2015)

Here we have an example of the acrimony such a conflict could provoke and the rousing narrative it produced—still capable of shocking listeners a century later. Though he owned a particularly large piece of land, MacDonald was clearly incensed. The way he chose to react reveals something of the personal and social meaning of land in this

community. While he addressed the issue twice, MacDonald never actually accused anyone of trespassing or theft. The note he left was firm but vague. Confirming what Roddie Farrell said about the advantages of ambiguity, MacDonald provided no details on the actual location of the property line. In a similar way, he chose not to address the incident directly when he spoke with MacKinnon. Instead, he contrasted their family reputations. While an indirect approach to social correction was favored in this community, his words went far beyond that. Because land was tied to social identity and prestige, MacDonald's primary objective appears to have been to reassert his social dominance over MacKinnon. In other words, to literally and figuratively 'put him in his place.' No doubt the strength of the reprimand was also meant to resonate as a warning to others. In a community that valued displays of verbal power, this one was especially memorable.

While accounts like this illustrate the dangerous potential land disputes had to undermine community and family stability, residents prefer to depict a possessive attitude towards land as a humorous cultural foible, usually associated with the old and intractable. In the following, Barrie Fraser told me a story from Lake Ainslie that conforms to this model:

Well, these two brothers didn't get along. John and Donald. And John was on his deathbed and this Reverend MacKillop—he was the Presbyterian minister at the time—he was trying to make peace between the two brothers.

He told John that he should see Donald.

And John said, "You tell Donald to stay on his own side of the line fence."

And the minister said, "Oh John, there'll be no line fences in Heaven."
"Weee'll build them," the old fella said! (Fraser 2015)

This exchange uses the image of a line fence to illustrate a troubled relationship between brothers; unable to come together, each one will reside on his own side of the

line fence. In a community in which emotional displays were largely avoided, this strategy made it possible to discuss difficult subjects. While the story revolves around forgiveness, the imagery it uses is not arbitrary. The coded exchange in this story works because the imagery is familiar to the audience, making it possible for people to understand the dialogue on two levels at once. Local listeners would immediately recognize the charged nature of the fence: marking the borders between properties, line fences were often sites of conflict.

This narrative exploits local familiarity with a controlling attitude towards land. While the presence of the minister shows this outlook was not universal, his inability to prompt change underscores its durability. In this way contested attitudes towards boundaries—physical and symbolic—are exposed in narrative form. Significantly, local sympathy would likely extend to the stubborn man in this case, despite the good advice he would not accept. Not only did he refuse to acquiesce to an authority figure intruding in private affairs—an anti-clerical subtext is not hard to detect here—he did so in a way that was both clever and evocative. Simply because this story is humorous does not mean its importance is trivial, however, according to Stanley Brandes:

Humour, in fact, may be said to be the most sensitive barometer of the concerns and preoccupations that are shared by a group of people. Without an understanding of humour, of what makes people laugh, we can never hope to penetrate to the core of a people's mentality in order to fully understand what motivates them to act as they do. (Brandes 1980, 97)

While most narratives about land disputes involve personal conflicts, the stakes are much higher in an account published in Gaelic in 1930. Cultural supremacy appears on the line as Scottish Gaels are pitted against their Irish neighbours in Catalone, Cape Breton County. Describing the dispute as a battle, the article starts with a background of

European settlement in the area, noting that the French were followed by the Irish who were later joined by Scottish Gaels. The anonymous contributor sets up the story:

Bha amannan ann anns nach biodh sith gu h-iomlan eadhon am measg nan Gaidheal fein, gu sonruichte a thaobh fearainn; agus cha chuir e ionghnadh sam bith oirnn ged bhiodh aimhreit eadar na Gaidheil agus na h-Eirionnaich, an uair a bhiodh iad laimh ri cheile. (Fear na Cèilidh 1930, 61)

There were times when there would not be complete peace even amongst the Gaels themselves, especially in regards to land; and it's not surprising at all to us although there would be unrest between the Gaels and the Irish, when they would be close to each other.

These tensions apparently came to a head over a piece of land that extended into the Catalone Lake. The forested peninsula was situated between the settlements, with a member of each claiming it as his own. Knowing the law would side with whoever took possession of the land first, the Irishman who lived nearest the peninsula sought out the support of his countrymen. They agreed to come together on a certain day to clear land on the point in order to solidify his claim to the land. When word of this arrangement was leaked to his neighbour, who had an equal claim to the land, he followed suit. Soliciting the support of other Scottish Gaels, he asked them to join him at the point even earlier on the appointed day. The plan went off without a hitch and, "*fada mu'n do ghairm an coileach a b'fheàrr air mocheirigh, cha robh Gaidheal foghainteach eadar Mira us Ceann Loch aig an robh tuagh gheur nach robh air an Rudha Mhor*" (...long before the best early rising rooster crowed, there wasn't an able-bodied Gael between Mira and Head Lake who owned a sharp axe who wasn't at the Big Point" (*Fear na Cèilidh* 1930, 61). When the Irish arrived some time later, they confronted the Gaels. Threats ensued and physical violence nearly erupted as representatives from each party brandished their axes like swords. Sensing discretion was the better part of valour, the

Irish relented. The Scottish Gaels returned to their work and before the day was through there was hardly a tree left standing on the peninsula. The accounts concludes by noting:

Cha do chuir na h-Eirionnaich dragh riamh tuilleadh air na Gaidheil mu dheidhinn fearainn. Bliadhnachan an deigh sin, chualas fear dhiubh ag aideachadh nach faca e riamh sealladh bu bhoidhche leis na Bagha Mhira, mile air falbh bho'n Rudha Mhor, maduinn an latha bha'n sud, an deidh dhaibh teicheadh roimh na Gaidheil. (Fear na Cèilidh 1930, 62)

The Irish never again bothered the Gaels about land. Years after this, one of them was heard confessing he never saw a more beautiful sight than Mira Bay, a mile away from the Big Point, on the morning of this day, after they had fled before the Gaels.

So why is this important? Why are conflicts like this worth examining? The material examined in this chapter provides the cultural context necessary to understand a variety of local narratives from the inside. It also helps us to better understand the community in which these stories are told. While these stories reflect local behavior, they also attempt to moderate it. Listeners are reminded that not everyone shares a preoccupation with land and that fighting over property should be avoided. More than one narrative concludes with the reminder that land ownership is impermanent, a worldly concern with little meaning in the end. Carlie MacNeil puts it this way: “All the land, and the way people thought of land... what you’re gonna end up in is a little over six feet, maybe three feet wide” (MacNeil 2015). In this way, local traditions address a potentially damaging preoccupation in communities that once depended on bonds of social reciprocation.

But the emphasis the oral tradition places on land—and particularly the stress it puts on the rightful possession of land—also suggests a deeper importance. Has dispossession—the ultimate unjust land seizure—left an enduring mark on local consciousness? Perhaps this explains why the oral tradition shows how land was

acquired in a fair and equitable manner from the Mi'kmaq, while immigrants and their descendants seem quite willing to fight each other and other ethnic groups for land in Nova Scotia. Since they were all colonists in Mi'kmaq territory, none had any more moral right to the land than the other.

Taken together, the protective attitude these stories espouse reveals a powerful attachment to land in Nova Scotia. Naturally enough, this prompts questions about its abandonment. After all, much of the land immigrants cleared was deserted within a couple of generations. In fact, between 1891 and 1941 more than 27,000 farms and 1,000,000 acres of once-productive farmland were abandoned in Nova Scotia (MacKinnon 1991, 253). In the next chapter, I ask whether outmigration reveals a change in attitudes toward land or a response to outside cultural and historical influences. More to the point, does the physical abandonment of land signal an indifference towards it?

Chapter Ten

Land Abandonment and Enduring Bonds

Remember that family farm I mentioned earlier? The one where my grandmother was raised? Twelve children were brought up there, but no one calls it home today. In fact, there are no permanent residents on that stretch of road anymore. Many neighbouring houses have fallen into disrepair and been reclaimed by forest. Such a scenario is not unusual in rural Nova Scotia. Since the amount of cleared acreage in the region peaked during the last decades of the nineteenth century, fields have been reverting to forests as long as anyone can remember.

A great deal has been written about the economic and social conditions behind outmigration in eastern Nova Scotia and Cape Breton Island. This work reminds us that rural communities were never as isolated as some romantic portrayals would suggest. Nor were they immune to domestic and global trends that shaped lives and landscapes elsewhere, particularly globalization and industrialization. Unfortunately the voices at the heart of this movement rarely emerge in such work. Fieldwork with contemporary tradition bearers provides an opportunity to see the exodus from another angle.

Not surprisingly, most scholars have examined this issue from a regional perspective, though the conclusions they draw rarely agree with each other and sometimes conflict. Historian Del Muise suggests population growth initiated the exodus: “The land was no longer capable of fully supporting the many offspring of the settlers” (1980, 81). Charles Dunn comes to the same conclusion, stating that “...the farms became overcrowded and overburdened and could no longer feed so many mouths” (1991, 125). Writer James Hunter, on the other hand, blames the land itself:

“the overwhelming majority of the farms created so laboriously here in the period following the initial Highland influx were simply incapable of providing a family with anything approximating to an adequate standard of life” (1994, 138). Sociologist Lori Cox views the rural depopulation within a larger social context, claiming “the problem of out-migration in rural Nova Scotia may have had less to do with pressure on the land resources than dreams of the young people for a different life” (1997, 192).

To be sure, some of the farmland abandoned in the region was marginal at best, necessitating a substantial expenditure of labour for little reward. Rusty Bittermann highlights an early consequence by reminding us that area residents have a long history of using wage labour to supplement and support area farms (1993, 42). But the rural exodus was never confined to areas with negligible agricultural potential and even prime land has been allowed to revert to forest. Moreover, in the years prior to the first recorded decline in cleared acreage, local agricultural productivity was remarkably high, with Cape Breton surpassing much of Canada in the per capita production of winter wheat, barley, oats potatoes, hay, and butter (Morgan 2008, 133).

Many contemporary residents also contradict claims of poor quality land. While some properties were exhausted of their natural fertility over time, others were maintained and improved. Along the east coast of Cape Breton, where ocean waves crash against the shore, many properties are rocky and windswept. According to Souter Strachan, residents used local resources to improve land there:

They often brought home—people used to tell me that they hauled tons of rotted kelp, rotted sea kelp. Right on the beach, all kinds of it. I seen it so thick as the wall there. Rotted right there with nothing in it but worms and everything else. They used to haul that and spread it on the grass. They’d usually go down to the factory in Forchu, where the lobsters were, and haul them up and spread them on the grass. The claws for instance, and what wasn’t usable. (Strachan 2008)

Perhaps as a result even land abandoned decades ago can be depicted in glowing terms. Recalling his family property in New Boston, Allan MacLeod told me: “You could go down there four feet with the plow at times if you wanted to. Oh yah, there was nothing wrong with their land!” (MacLeod 2015). Martha Ramey was similarly positive about the land her family farmed in Rear Big Pond: “Oh the ground we had would—oh my gosh, the crops we raised were just fantastic” (Ramey 2014). Expounding on the virtues of the soil in North River, Murdock MacLennan revealed how hard work made marginal lands bloom:

Of course, North River here, the land was very good for potatoes. It was equally good as Prince Edward Island, you know, as far as production and that....You could plow all day—you might not hit a rock. At first it was rockier but they removed all the rocks—they picked all the rocks and had them in stone piles in the pasture somewhere. Some of the farms were quite rocky but they picked them so that you could plow all day without hitting a rock. (MacLennan 2007)

Fieldwork with area residents indicates that land abandonment is not interpreted locally exclusively as a product of poor land. Instead, residents advocate a more nuanced understanding of outmigration. Some fault changing technology and standards of productivity: “It didn’t lend itself to mechanization. Because we’re pretty hilly here: especially in Ottawa Brook. So you might be able to grow hay on the side of the hollow and cut it with the scythe but it’s not like having ten sections out in Saskatchewan” (MacNeil *et al* 2015). John Stilgoe, a landscape historian, picks up this theme, reminding us this was an international phenomenon:

Hilly fields, rocky fields, any fields that could not be adapted to the delicate hay rakes and reapers and seed drills were worked in the traditional way until their owners learned the impossibility of profit. To farm competitively meant to farm with machinery, and by the 1840s New Englanders realized that machinery was not for them. Everywhere the hill farmers abandoned their land, selling their

hard-won holdings for pittances and moving westward to lands advertised as ‘ripe for the plow.’ The wilderness returned. (Stilgoe 1982, 187)

Other residents claim that isolation from major transportation routes and commercial markets are to blame: “So it wasn’t the state of the land, the quality of the land, that forced so many people to leave those. It was just the inaccessibility, you know, especially in the winter” (MacMillan 2015). Of course, notions of isolation and remoteness are subjective. Isolated from what? Remote from where? Concepts like these are predicated on the idea that one place is more important than another, that rural regions are peripheral to towns and cities.

During the pioneering era, when the local population was small and transportation networks undeveloped, such differences were less pronounced. Increased dependence on people and places removed from the local community was necessary for these notions to take hold. As towns and cities grew, offering more and more services and opportunities to nearby residents, smaller settlements were increasingly drawn into their orbit. By the second half of the nineteenth century, when large numbers of people started leaving the region for the United States, mental horizons were still grounded in the local experience but expanding quickly. When an American tourist asked a young girl he encountered in Cape Breton where a certain road went, she responded “It goes to the Strait of Canso, sir, and on to Montana—that’s where my brother John is working on a ranch—and I don’t know where else it goes” (Quoted in Tennyson 2014, 251).

Located at the northernmost point of the province, Meat Cove is now considered one of the most remote communities in Nova Scotia, but when MacLellan was young it never felt that way:

I find more isolation now than I did when I grew up with my grandparents or my grandparent's generation. Because, when I was growing up here as a child, and other children in the community, and the other families that lived here at those times, there was always social gatherings. (MacLellan 2015)

Factors like peripherality and marginality are not defined by geographic terms alone. Instead, they are part of a state of mind capable of shaping personal and communal destinies. Suzi Jones makes this point when she argues that “isolation is not for the most part a physical fact, it is more of a mentifact—a state of mind, a cultural-psychological attitude” (1976, 108). In this case, strong social bonds between residents, and a lifestyle that relied heavily—though never exclusively—on local resources meant rural residents were less likely to feel removed from some larger community.

Improved transportation links with urban centers worked like a double edged sword, providing easier access to markets and employment, but undercutting the value of locally produced resources and expanding perceptual horizons that amplified a sense of isolation. Evolving perceptions of marginality are easy to discern in a story told by Alex MacDonald from Castle Bay, Cape Breton County:

Like I was telling you about the old fellow down here, on the other side of Eskasoni. Well, they were living on the backlands at that time. If you were living on the backlands, if somebody moved from the front, sold their property, you could buy it if you had the means. So that meant you got close to the water, by the road. But, if that didn't happen, you were out of luck. So, the old people knew in the backlands. And the young people wished—always talking about the front, the front, the front.

The old fella was telling somebody about it, he said, “*Nuair bha sinn a' fuireach air a' Chùl, cha chluinneadh tu ach, front, front—fad an t-siubhail, front.*” *A-nisd, tha sinn a' fuireach air a' front, cha chluinneadh tu ach town, town, town, fad an t-siubhail, aig na daoine òg.*” (When we were living in the Rear, you never heard anything but front, front, all the time, front. Now, we're living in the front, you never hear anything but town, town, town, all the time, from the young people.) (MacDonald 2007)

This story reminds us that the relative stability of the front lands was deceptive: farms vacated along the shore were sometimes acquired by residents from the backlands. It also suggests evolving generational aspirations; first to improved prospects and social prestige within a rural context, followed by an urban outlook that eschewed farming entirely. Eventually, thousands would choose to move to the United States. But as industrial centers in the region expanded during the late nineteenth century young people were also drawn into mines and steel plants in Nova Scotia. The repercussions of this movement would go on to shape the social and physical landscape of the region for generations to come.

Perhaps not surprisingly—since they live in the country—contemporary rural residents are quick to point out the downside of this trend, including the dangers of the work and a loss of personal autonomy. Consider, for instance, what Derrick MacLellan says about it: “It wasn’t such a great idea, or great job, once they got working there. But when you get caught up into that system it’s pretty hard to get out of it. Because back in the thirties...if you worked for the Dominion Coal Mines, they owned you” (MacLellan 2015). Roddie Farrell goes so far as to depict the movement within a moral framework; the industrial area providing dangerous temptations to go with dangerous work: “And the people that moved away, there was probably a lot more alcoholism, probably a lot more early deaths from a different type of a harder life. The life was hard here—but it was kind of like a *good*, hard life” (Farrell 2015). Collected by Barrie Fraser, the following account demonstrates this movement has always had its critics:

Christy and Dan lived on Cape Mabou. At the time there was a great exodus of families moving down to Inverness. The women of the house caught the fever, and wanted to move, but Dan wouldn't budge. Not having any success with their badgering, the women finally sent for the doctor to see if he could get to the root of Dan's immobility. After an examination, and surmising the

situation with the women, the Doctor said about Dan, "He's the only wise one among you!" (Fraser, n.d., 76)

Considering this exchange likely took place a century ago, what explains its longevity? Barre Toelken argues that, "anything which can stay alive for a while in oral tradition must have *some* importance for those who pass it on, or it would not have survived" (Quoted in Allen 1990, 16). Perhaps the answer lies in its central message: that residents would be wise to stay in the country. As Ching and Creed point out, "When rustics denounce city life they may be deploying an identity politics that challenges this urban hegemony and asserts their own value" (Creed 1997, 18). Since the messenger is a medical doctor—an educated authority who lived and worked in town—this response likely carried considerable weight since he was in a position to know the benefits of urban life.

Of course, his was not the only voice of dissent. Local bards also weighed in on the exodus during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Allan MacDonald described the drawbacks associated with coal mining efforts in late nineteenth century Inverness County:

*Tha 'n gual am Broad Cove
'Na loid g' a tharruin
Gu bòrd na luingeas their chuain;
'S an gearran dubh iarainn,
Is sgiàmh 'na anail,
A' riasladh fearainn bho luach*

The coal in Broad Cove
In loads is carried
To ships that sail out to sea;
The horse of black iron,
Breath now shrieking,
Is spoiling the farms of their worth. (Fergusson 1977, 58)

While these songs concentrate on the physical impact of industrial activity, Joseph MacKinnon zeroed in on the personal and social repercussions of this lifestyle. As the principal of the high school in early twentieth century Glace Bay, he was in a good position to see the drawbacks of life in a company town first-hand. In the following, MacKinnon urges young men to remain on the farms:

*O! nach bochd do Ghàidheal fhallain
Fuireach anns an àite seo*

*'Bhith 'n a thraill bho Luan gu Sàthurn
Aig aintighearnan fo sàiltean,*

*Nuair a dh'fhaodadh e bhi sona
Air baile farsuing aluinn*

*Le crodh laoidh, caoirich gheala.
Cearcan, eich 's car dh'fhaoit,'*

*Obair ghlan air uachdar talamh,
Seach toll dubh an amhraidh*

Oh, isn't it a shame for a healthy Gael living in this place to be a slave from Monday to Saturday under the heels of tyrants, when he could be happy on a handsome spreading farm with milk-cows, white sheep, hens, horses and perhaps a car, and clean work on the surface of the earth, rather than in the black pit of misery. (Dunn 1991, 131-132)

Such exhortations evidently had little impact. The population of Sydney, the main industrial town in Cape Breton, boomed during the first part of the twentieth century, going from 2,180 in 1881 to 28,305 in 1941. During the same period, rural populations plummeted. But because early forays into urban centers were often intended to be temporary—sometimes aimed at securing funds to be invested on the farm—temporary wage labour initially helped support rural regions (Graham 2006, 52). Rusty Bittermann expands on this point, writing, “For many, prolonged, and often distant, wage

work, was an early phase in lives that ultimately would be lived out on the land. Young men or women might work away for years to accumulate the cash necessary to permit them to acquire the things needed to establish a household of their own” (Bittermann 1993, 37). In many ways this trend continues today and its impact has been profound.

Many small communities carved out of the forest in the nineteenth century shrank or disappeared completely in the twentieth. In many ways, rural depopulation was a self-perpetuating cycle. As more people deserted their rural homes, life became more difficult for those who remained, encouraging others to follow suit (MacInnes 1972, 89). Social connections were fractured and reciprocal work relationships abandoned. With time, this contributed to a virtual collapse in small-scale agriculture. Having operated one of the last remaining sheep farms around Lake Ainslie, Barrie Fraser knows the situation well:

Small farming, it pretty well has to be a community thing. Otherwise you have to do every thing and it’s just too much work, too much expense. Like say fixing these fences for example. And a lot of things would be shared work. Butchering, all that was sort of shared. And as our old neighbor used to say, “Poor fences make poor neighbours.” That was his thing. ‘Cause, you know, if you didn’t keep your fences up, you’re creating all these problems for other people. (Fraser 2015)

Though they provided educational and work opportunities, regional industrial centers were not without serious disadvantages. Environmental degradation was widespread. Market fluctuations and poor management also caused generations of work shortages, labour exploitation and unrest. Employees who lived in company houses and worked in company stores were especially vulnerable to this instability. From her home in Glenora Falls, Mary Campbell expanded on this point, using the history of the nearby town of Inverness to illustrate:

It was a boom-town for a while. But booms don’t last. Just like our oil industry today in Alberta. There’s boom and bust. So when the boom ended, the land was

gone. And they were living in these company houses. And they were required to buy their produce from the company store....Well, at least if you had your land you could have one milk cow, you could plant some potatoes, some vegetables, you could sustain yourself. You could keep a roof over your head, even if you had to go and build a log cabin all over again. But these people who came off the farms and moved into the booming town of Inverness, and who made their living in the mines, they were pretty much left high and dry. And all their pride was gone too. (Campbell 2015)

As this account makes clear, residents use stories from the past to comment on contemporary realities. In this case, land is conceptualized as a form of insurance or protection. Generations of residents have used wage labour to supplement and support farms. Sometimes this work was local, but many others spent extended periods working outside the region. Yet for many of these people “access to the soil held out the hope of achieving control over the time and their labour, and persistence in straddling two worlds constituted a way of resisting the imperatives and dependence of wage work” (Bittermann 1993, 44). Even today, tradition bearers like Allan MacLeod point out the potential local land has to support new beginnings: “Oh it’ll be good someday, I mean. But the way things are growing, I mean, they’ll run out of land...Somebody will come make a start there” (MacLeod 2015).

Mary Campbell shared a story that underscores the protective power of land to insulate people from the vagaries of wage labour. While planting potatoes one spring, her father noticed seed was going missing from the furrows. The family thought perhaps an animal or mischievous neighbour was responsible, but eventually her mother spotted someone surreptitiously recovering the potatoes, placing them in a sack and walking towards town. She immediately recognized the culprit: a former inhabitant of Cape Mabou who had relocated to work in the mines of Inverness. Apparently, the move had

not worked out and his children were starving. In order to preserve his pride and help his children, the Campbells chose not to confront the man and instead planted the field twice that year. Without the ability to return to the land, according to Mary Campbell, residents were dependent on others and thus “their pride was gone too” (Campbell 2015).

Given the reality of life in these industrial centers, we might ask why so many people were eager to abandon a life on the farm. After all, studies have shown that farm-reared migrants tend to move into the lowest categories and most poorly paid occupations in the city and show little upward mobility over time (Cox 1997, 319). Once again, fieldwork with tradition bearers helps clarify this movement. As a young man in the years leading up to the Second World War, Willie Fraser worked in the coalmines of Inverness. When I asked him why so many men gave up the rural lifestyle to work underground, Fraser responded:

Because... you had to live on the farm; porridge fourteen times a day...over in Inverness you could get a little pay, weekend would come, Friday or Saturday you get maybe twenty dollars, fifteen, twenty dollars just for the whole week or something like that. Boy, you were a rich man, you had a chest on! You could rest up and get the girls and go around. (Fraser 2003)

Fraser identifies the chance to receive a paycheck as a primary motivation, but the way in which this is linked to personal pride is equally important. For settlers, land was an accessible form of security and status. For their descendants, a salary did much the same. Time and again, participants who came of age during the first part of the twentieth century depicted the rural region where they were raised as one where the necessities of life were available in abundance, but cash was rare.

Jessie MacDonald recalls a time when families were lucky to be able to contribute a copper penny at Sunday Mass. Similarly, Fr. Allan MacMillan told me a

story about neighbours trying to scrape together enough money to buy a stamp in Boisdale. Archie Kerr summed up the situation, saying: “We didn’t have money but we had everything else” (Kerr 2015). Even when farms provided a surplus, local merchants were frequently unable or unwilling to pay, preferring instead to operate on exchange. Mickey John H. MacNeil recalls the situation well. Asked why people left the country, he responded:

O uell, air t-sàilleibh nach robh airgead ann. Cha robh airgead ann...Rud a thogadh tu air an àite, bha thu ga thoirt shìos dhan stòr, chan fhaigheadh tu airgead. Chan fhaigheadh tu airgead. Cha robh airgead idir ann. (MacNeil 2015)

Oh well, because there was no money. There was no money...Something you raised on the place, you were taking it down to the store, you wouldn’t get money. You wouldn’t get money. There wasn’t any money at all.

As long as the rural economy was characterized by reciprocity and exchange, such scarcity was not acute, but as residents were increasingly drawn into a cash economy, financial scarcity would have become more and more obvious according to anthropologist Thomas Hylland Ericksen: “Poverty becomes a greater problem the moment wealth is perceived as a definite possibility” (2001, 25). The growing dominance of a cash economy in a society formally dominated by subsistence farming and communal cooperation had profound consequences. Ultimately, Mary Campbell concludes, it “... introduced a different value system. It weaned the people away from the land” (Campbell 2015).

A regular paycheck allowed residents to more fully participate in the expanding commercial economy, partaking in various amenities and services. Many people likely appreciated the freedom this provided them, not only to make purchases but also to avoid

participation in a system of communal reliance predicated on reciprocation. It also freed others from land that was probably unsuited for agriculture in the first place. Importantly, however, this independence and freedom nurtured a perceived social ascendancy.

Eventually, as Charles Dunn notes, “some of those remaining in the country began to feel inferior and act deferentially or even apologetically when their prosperous city cousins came back to visit them” (1991, 132). While these annual visits were often joyful reunions—eagerly anticipated and fondly recalled—they also deepened social divisions according to Campbell and MacLean: “it was the sons and daughters returning on vacation from the ‘Boston States’ who put the first deep puncture in the folk-culture” (1974, 185).

Since the language associated with life in the city was English, the linguistic implications are obvious. Writing about language shift in Ireland, Caoimhin Ó Danachair suggests that a pragmatic comparison between depressed rural regions where Gaelic was spoken and an outside world seen as materially affluent produced a psychological reaction in residents that affected language use (1969). No doubt the same occurred in Nova Scotia. Mary Campbell was told that her maternal grandfather encountered “tremendous ridicule” towards his Gaelic while studying in Pennsylvania. Upon his return to Cape Breton, he chose not to speak the language to children and “insisted that good English and a quality education—quality, that is, by American standards—would be acquired by his children” (Campbell 2015).

Institutional forces reinforced a sense of inferiority. During his childhood in Framboise, Souter Strachan told me he spoke little English: “*Cha robh gùth ’tighinn às ar gopag ach a’ Ghàidhlig*” (There wasn’t a word coming out from our beaks but the

Gaelic). But when his lack of fluency in English was exposed at school one day, he was publicly humiliated: made the subject of laughter and jeers. Nearly nine decades later, Strachan became uncharacteristically serious when he told me about it: “*Cha d’rinn mi dìochùimhne riamh air*” (I never forgot it) (Strachan 2006). As more and more families chose to speak in English, even children turned on each other. Cathie MacKinnon was mocked by some peers for speaking Gaelic. Eighty years later, she recalled these actions confessing, “they hurt me to the core” (MacKinnon and MacNeil 2011).

Though work in the mines and steel plant was dangerous and difficult, life on the farm was hardly easy. This was particularly true during the height of the exodus, when mechanization had scarcely begun to make inroads into the local farming industry. Allan MacLeod never saw a tractor on his farm in New Boston. Instead, he always made hay with a hand scythe and, much later, a horse drawn mower. The labour required was tremendous. Archie Kerr recalled this work without nostalgia: “This hay-making, you know, good heavens, you’d cut the hay, you’d turn it over, you’d cock it up in the evening, then you’d shake it out in the morning, then you’d turn it over again, and then, if the weather was agreeable, you’d put it in the barn. But it was labor intensive. Oh it was terrible” (Kerr 2015).

Though he champions a more traditional way of life, Jeff MacDonald also understands why so many people abandoned local farms: “Talk to my grandparents eh? Worked hard on the farm. They had one of the most beautiful farms. Up on the edge here. And they went from that to a little trailer on a plot of land that’s all moss around it. And this was a step up for them; this was progress. Because they associated the other place with work, work, work” (MacDonald 2015). Significantly, the person with the

most recent memories of farm life was also the least sentimental about it. Though strongly connected to the rural community where she was raised and resides today, Joanne MacIntyre also recalls the downside of life on the farm:

I had an uncle pass away. We all went to the funeral. But everybody can't go 'cause there's cows. The funeral was in PEI. So a couple of people, Dad and one of my brothers, stayed home and they had to take care of the animals. And so—it was every day. There's no letting up; you milk at five and you milk at five. And it's every single day. And so that – I don't want anything to do with this land 'cause all it did was make work for me. So, maybe resentment's a strong word. Maybe it's escape. (MacIntyre 2015)

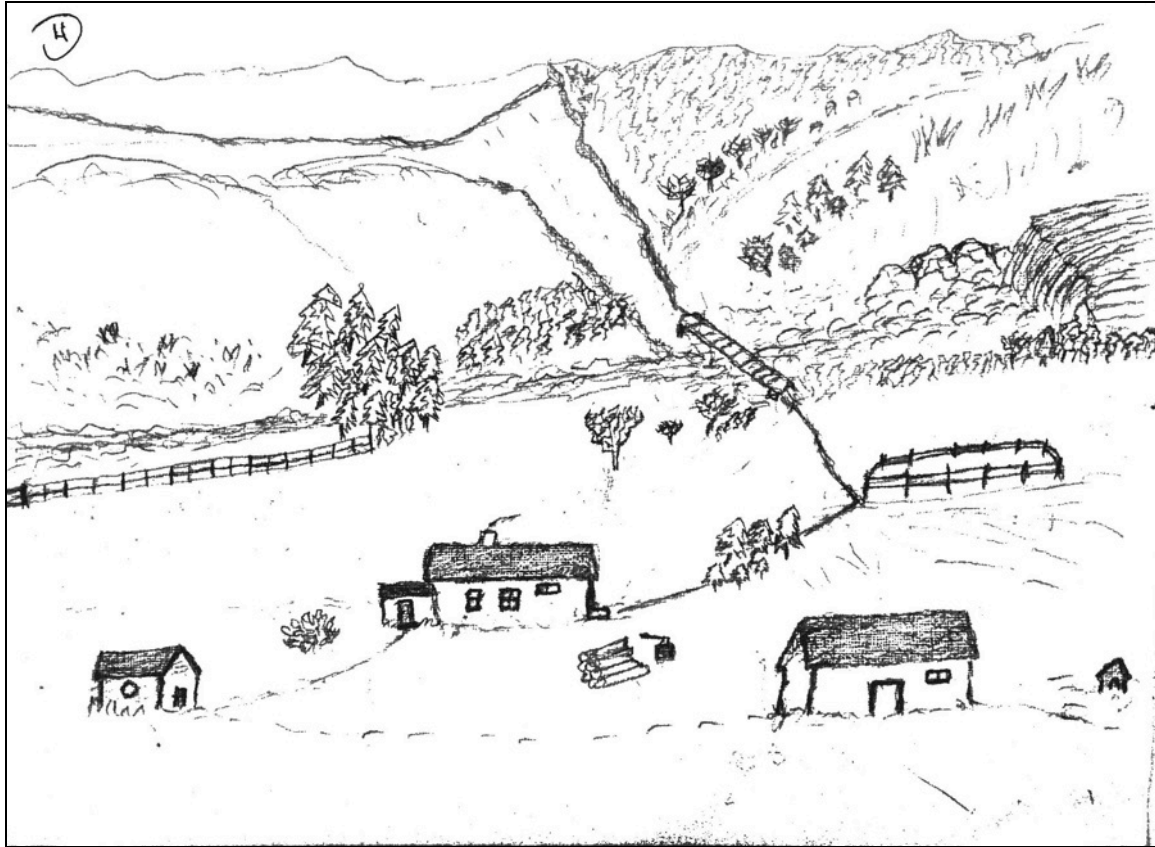
Since land was so closely connected to lifestyle, escaping one usually meant leaving the other. Martha Ramey provides an example. She was raised in a family that enjoyed a strong social network and rich musical and linguistic tradition. Days working in the fields were punctuated by nights dancing to fiddle and pipe music under the stars. When we spoke several years ago, Ramey painted a glowing picture of the farm where she was raised during the Depression, providing the visual evidence in the form of a drawing she made from memory.

SM: And the potatoes grew well?

MR: *O, Mhuire bhinn!* (Oh sweet virgin!) I guess. We had the most beautiful gardens ever. Yah. Flowers and trees, animals. Everything grew so beautiful. Yah. It was a choice piece of property. With lots of woodland too eh? For pulp or whatever. An awful lot of pulp came off of there. Hardwood.

SM: What's interesting to me is when you describe it, it sounds like a little piece of paradise...

MR: It probably was. (Ramey 2014)



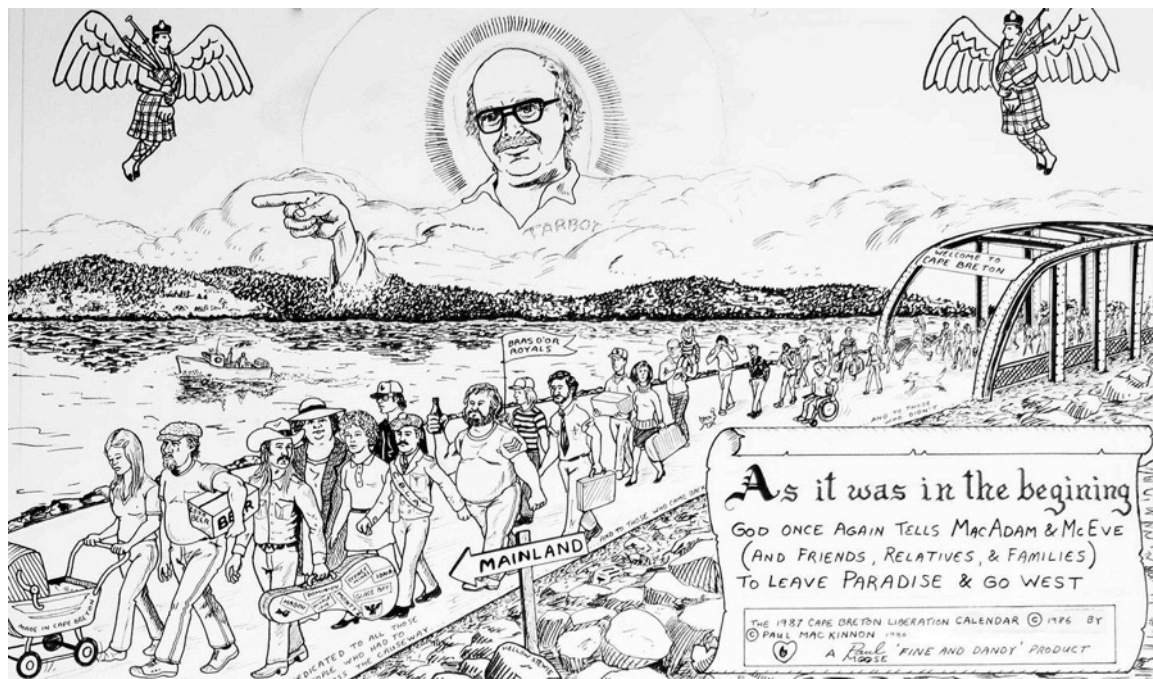
(10.1: Map drawn by Martha Ramey, featuring her childhood home in Rear Big Pond. This area has now largely reverted to forest)

Despite such a positive appraisal, the farm was eventually abandoned and all six children moved away. Ramey never regretted her decision to leave the farm, though she always had to work hard in Sydney. Educational prospects were limited in the country, and farm labour was relentless and devoid of financial reward. In the end, Ramey presents the prospect of staying on the farm as virtually impossible:

Well, you knew you could never live there because there was nothing there for you. No. What were you going to live on eh? There was nothing for you to make a living there. You had to leave. And once you leave, you're not going to go back to stay, that's for sure. There's still nothing there to live on eh? If you had lots of money, probably you would never have left there. But it cost money to live eh? (Ramey 2014).

Though contemporary tradition bearers generally depict the land they worked in positive terms—lamenting the decline of the communities they supported—a sense of

resignation pervades discussions about rural depopulation and land abandonment. Some modern cultural critics have picked up on this theme, comparing the exodus of Scottish Gaels from Cape Breton to a second Highland Clearance (eg. Muise 1980: 82). Paul ‘Moose’ MacKinnon goes a step further. In a calendar illustration from 1987, MacKinnon depicts outmigration from Cape Breton as a second expulsion from Paradise. Significantly, the iconography and names he employs are Scottish. Flanked by angels wearing kilts and playing bagpipes, local celebrities and others cross the causeway towards the mainland.



(10:2 Illustration by Paul ‘Moose’ MacKinnon)⁸

While rural depopulation is a complex movement, subject to innumerable personal, environmental, and economic factors, it seems important to note that this movement has been particularly severe in areas of the province settled by Scottish Gaels,

⁸ The Canso Causeway. 1987. Calendar. Paul MacDonald Fonds, MG 21.2. Beaton Institute, CBU.

including Antigonish and Inverness Counties (MacKinnon 1991, 248). This is a pattern observed in other regions where they settled, including the Eastern Townships of Quebec, where the land was poor, and southeastern Ontario, where it was much better: “Scots abandoned the level fertile farmland of Glengarry as readily as their kin deserted the rocky ridges of Nova Scotia” (MacKenzie 2003, 156). For this reason, some scholars have concluded that Highlanders were “itchy-footed migratory creatures” (MacKenzie 2003, 156) or that “wanderlust apparently seized the Nova Scotia Scot soon after he had become properly settled” (Campbell and MacLean 1974, 183). Could it really be that simple?

Perhaps my own experience has made me particularly sensitive to such claims. Having moved away for work, and written much of this thesis while living in the Yukon, I am sympathetic to generations of local residents who have needed to leave the region. My granduncle was one such person. I met him a few times; he never made much of an impression. But stories about him did. I was told how he moved to Toronto in order to find work, how he lived his life for a two-week vacation in the summer, and how, when it came, he would drive non-stop to Cape Breton where there would be visits and music, and drinking, and songs, and Gaelic. For the rest of the year, he spent his free time sitting on his front porch listening to fiddle music. It has hardly wanderlust that fueled him.

In the end, accounts that attribute depopulation to wanderlust are hard to substantiate and easy to manipulate. By attributing the exodus to innate cultural impulses, outmigration is presented as natural and unavoidable. Writing from an Irish perspective, Séan DeFréine argues that “The Celtic wanderlust is not an explanation of anything. It is a misleading label of unknown authorship attached to a social

phenomenon of recent origin...” (1978, 19). The potential implications are important to recognize. For example, Premier Angus L. Macdonald rationalized out-migration from Nova Scotia as a product of Scottish identity (McKay 1992, 44). But since the breakdown of communities is not well understood, stressing the inevitability of rural depopulation is a standard response (MacLean 1998). In that regard, rural depopulation has much in common with language loss.

In fact, since language transmission was virtually nonexistent in cities and towns, the abandonment of language and land can be seen as simultaneous processes in Gaelic Nova Scotia. Charles Dunn made this link explicit many years ago when he claimed the survival of the language depended on the sustainability of rural communities in the region (1991, 140). More modern observers have also noted this connection, with Daniel MacInnes claiming that, “Gaelic was robust when people lived on the land, when the patterns of settlement remained homogenous, and when dominant local social institutions were informed mainly by religious belief” (2011, 2). Writing about the decline of the Highland settlement in the Eastern townships of Quebec, Ian Prattis takes this relationship a step further: “This suggests that Gaelic culture is closely related to an agricultural mode of production organized in a relatively egalitarian manner. It furthermore suggests that trends away from this organization will produce inroads to that culture” (Doucett 1980, 147).

Perhaps for that reason language advocates have long rallied against rural depopulation. Founded nearly a century ago, the Scottish Catholic Society of Canada argued vigorously that economic development should not require Gaels to abandon their rural roots or language. It supported rural renewal and linguistic fidelity in order to

counter out-migration (Graham 2006, 56). One of its supporters, Rev. Donald MacAdam, championed a campaign to stop the outflow of young people by supporting Gaelic (Graham 2006, 52). Frances MacEachen, a long time Gaelic language advocate in Nova Scotia, discusses the connection between language and place:

Once people lose their language, they lose their sense of identity. They lose their sense of place, then they leave. This is why we have this terrible problem of out-migration. We need to look at the Gaelic culture and our community....What's happened here is that when the young people are being taught in the schools, they aren't given a sense that they should stay here. The plans are all about going away....Why this out-migration is encouraged, why it happens, is due to the sense that Cape Breton is a place where people can't make money, where they can survive, but not succeed (Lord-Wood 1998, 139)

For this reason, it may be useful to consider land abandonment as a product of cultural anomie, as first theorized by Durkheim (1951, 1972) and expanded on by Merton (1938). Acculturation and cultural demoralization meant local residents no longer saw value in their traditional way of life—their language and rural lifestyle for instance—and even when they did they did not have faith in their future viability. Such a process has been observed in many minority cultures and rural communities worldwide. Hugh Brody provides a detailed analysis of its effect in rural Ireland, where its influence on immigration has clear parallels with Gaelic Nova Scotia (1981). Séan DeFréine also notes its presence in Ireland, where he describes anomie as a “state of social disintegration arising from serious disruption of social life and institutions” (1978, 41). Writing about two evacuated communities in Ireland and Scotland, Janet Leyland also identifies cultural and linguistic erosion as contributing factors, writing “micro factors, such as the impact of social change, loss of identity, and demoralisation also merit consideration (1995, 83).

And while rural outmigration was part of a global trend, its effects were often intensely personal. J. B. Jackson argues that it almost always occurs because “existence for people in the country became more difficult, more joyless and without reward” (1994, 25). A sense of loss is certainly palpable in stories about the erosion of rural communities in Gaelic Nova Scotia. Mickey MacNeil has lived nearly all his life in Jamesville. As a result, he has witnessed several generations move away, but the loss of a childhood friend still resonates with him decades later:

Agus aon taigh a bha seo, bha gille 's nighean 's a' mhàthair ann. Cha robh ann ach àite beag 's bha e uamhasach cnòcail, 's smaontich am boireannach gu' mubheadh iad gu Sudni. Uell, bha sinn uamhasach diombach gu robh iad a' dol a dh' fhagail. Agus bha an gille uamhasach math gu – bhiodh e ag gabhail òrain Ghàidhlig. Agus thogadh e òrain Ghàidhlig, air a chluinntinn e dà no trì thrùpan, bhiodh e aige! Agus, bha iad a' dol a dh' fhàgail an t-àite 's bha iad dol a' mhubheadh sios a Shudni. Agus, a' feasgar a bha seo, dìreach ro'n Nollaig, thàinig iad, dh'fhag iad an taigh, ghlas iad an taigh. Agus thàinig iad gu station shios ann a' sheo. Agus bha sinn uileadh gu math [diombach] dha bhith fagail. Agus cha do nochd iad riamh dhan taigh as a dheoghaidh sin. Dh'fhag iad an taigh – is bha an taigh math nuair a dh'fhàg iad. Cha d' thàinig iad riamh dhan taigh a-rithist as a dheoghaidh. Thuit an taigh 's chaidh e air sgaoil. (MacNeil 2015)

And this one house, there was a boy and a girl and the mother there. It was only a small place, and it was terribly hilly, and the lady thought they would move to Sydney. Well, we were all terribly sad that they were going to leave. And the boy was terribly good to—he would be singing Gaelic songs. And he would pick up a Gaelic song, after hearing it two or three times, he'd have it! And this afternoon, right before Christmas, they came, and they left, they locked the door. And they came down to the station down here. And we were all so sorry they were leaving. And they never appeared again at the house after that. They left the house—and it was a good house when they left it. They never came back to the house again after that. The house fell down and went to ruin.

Due to their subjective nature, emotional bonds have too often been overlooked in studies exploring rural depopulation and land abandonment in Gaelic Nova Scotia. A rare exception is a government document delineating the challenges associated with

relocating residents of Black Point, along the northern tip of Cape Breton. The report records that “Despite the fact that out-migration from the region has been high during the past decade, and despite the depressed attitude of the inhabitants, the population can be said to be generally ‘in love’ with the region as a whole” (Quoted in Cox 1997, 318).

Having examined the controversial relocation in detail, Lori Vitale Cox concludes that, “People in Northern Cape Breton recognized the value of their way of life but in the end they were persuaded that it would not sustain them and their children” (Cox 1997, 390). While this conclusion refers to a specific resettlement prompted by government, it contains valuable insight into the role psychological perceptions play in discrediting cultures and places.

Simply because people leave an area does not mean their emotional connections to it are severed. The song corpus provides ample evidence. In the same way as modern singers compose songs about relocated outposts in Newfoundland, bards in Gaelic Nova Scotia have long returned to nostalgic recollections of former communities, prompting Jim Watson to observe, “There’s the paradox that people are constantly leaving that place that they praise, esteem and hold so dear” (Watson 2015). The following verse from Oregon, Victoria County, serves as a good example:

*’S iomadh latha sona bha sinn
Anns an àite ud a’ cur dòigh air,
Ged tha e nis a’ dol fo ’n choille,
’S gun spréidh no duine an còir dha*

*’S e siud a dh’fhàg mi-fhìn cho duilich,
Is tha sinn uile brònach,
E bhì fo eòin na coille nis,
’S fo fhoireachan nan smeòrach*

Many a happy day we were
In that place working the land

Although it is now under the forest
Without a flock or anyone to tend it

It's that, that has left me so sorry
And we are all sad
That it belongs to the birds of the forest now
And thickets for robins (Thornhill 2006, 181).

Using a form of pathetic fallacy, several songs even suggest aspects of the natural environment were enhanced by human activity and have been weakened without their presence. Consider, for instance, a song composed by *Iain MacMhuirich* [John Currie], which was published in 1927. Recalling his former home on *Beinn an Fuarain* (Wellspring Mountain), Currie claims that since people have deserted the area, certain animals have followed suit.

*Cha'n fhaicear sionnach a' gluasad,
Sios na suas far am biodh cos;
Chaidh an glacadh ged bu luatha iad;
Cha'n eil tuar gu'm bheil iad beo.
Chaidh na cait fhiadhaich air fuadach,
Leis gach fuaime a bh'air an toir,
Cha'n eil ann a nis 's a mhonadh
Ach na dh'fhuirich do na h-eoin.*

No fox will be seen moving,
Down or up where there would be a hollow.
They were trapped despite their speed,
There is no indication they are alive now.
The wildcats have been exiled,
With every noise that pursued them
There is nothing now in the forest
But what birds remained (MacMhuirich 1929, 7).

Contemporary tradition bearers have also been known to espouse such a perspective. Reminiscing about the rural community where she was raised, Theresa Burke claimed that the river was more productive and beautiful when people looked after

it. Burke told me how her father used to walk its banks, removing deadfalls and debris that might obstruct its flow and the passage of salmon. Not only did this make the river more productive for fish, it improved its visual appearance for neighbours:

Ach, bha an abhainn mhòr, bha i eireachdail, an uair sin: Breac's Brook. Cha deach e coimhead as a deoghaidh. Bha m'athair, bha e gabhaidh math gus a'coimhead as deoghaidh, na h-abhainn mhòr. Toiseach an t-samhraidh, nuair a bhiodh claspers mhòr dèigh, 's windfalls 's logaichean a' tighinn a-nuas, bhiodh sin a' bristeadh na h-abhainn 's bhiodh iad a' stad ann an àitechean. Gheobhadh m'athair às a' sin iad, los gum biodh an abhainn clìor. O, bha an abhainn mhòr eireachdail ann roimhe. (Burke 2009)

But, the big river, at that time it was beautiful: Breac's Brook. It wasn't looked after. My father, he was awfully good to look after the big river. At the beginning of the summer, when the big ice claspers and windfalls and logs would be coming down, that would be breaking up the river, and they would be stuck in places. My father would get them out from there so the river would be clear. Oh, the big river was beautiful there before.

Without human intervention, Burke claims wildlife has suffered and the area has lost some of what once made it so attractive. This perspective reveals much about how area residents conceptualize their connection to the natural environment. Their symbiotic relationship requires the presence of people to ensure the health and beauty of the landscape and its animal and plant life. Demonstrating an unusual degree of ecological sensitivity for the period, several early twentieth century bards even tackled the negative effects of industrial development. When an iron mine was established near his home in Barachois, Cape Breton County, Malcolm MacNeil spoke out against the noise and smoke it produced by composing a song in Gaelic (MacDonald and MacDonald 1992, 55-59).

In many ways, this represents a protest as much against the new world order, with its foreign social conditions and relationship to land, as any particular result from the

mind. Drawing on similar situation, Mary Hufford has described the way mining operations sacrifice land in Appalachia, concluding that, “life space has been thoroughly subordinated to economic space” (2004, 281). Such subordination rarely goes completely unchallenged. Lachlan Currie provides a final example of the protective attitude some residents developed to their natural surroundings. Composed in the mid-nineteenth century, his song reprimands a neighbour for allowing a fire to get out of control near Boisdale, Cape Breton County. Recounting its destructive effect on crops, wildlife and local environment, Currie describes the fire as a disgrace. Considering the obvious hazards to people and livestock posed by the blaze, this seems reasonable. But the focus of his verse is not on the domestic threat the fire posed. Instead, the bard shows a special concern for wild animals and natural habitat it affected. The last line of the song, which may reference an old taboo, represents an appeal to respect the natural environment.

*'S ann Di-Dòmhnaich
Bha nathraichean 'gam fògradh
Bha maighich air an ròsladh
Is eòin air an slaopadh;
B'e siud an gnothach gràineil
Dha'n fhear a chuir 'nan smal air
Bho shàbhail[eadh] na daoine.*

*Is iomadh madadh-ruadh
A bha ruith air feadh nam bruach;
An earball air an gualann
Gu luath air feadh an aonaich;
Na fithich is iad ag éigheach;
Na ròcaisean 'nan éiginn;
Na smeòraich iad fhèin,
Thug iad réic, is chan e 'n t-ioghnadh.*

*Tha mi an dòchas
Gun èist sibh ris an òran
A h-uile duine beò
A tha còmhnaidh an taobh-sa;
Gun toir sibh 'n aire an còmhnaidh,*

*Ur gnothaich a bhith dòigheil,
Is gun teine 'chur ri èòin
Gus am pòr a chur aog oirnn.*

It was Sunday afternoon that the snakes were sent into exile, the hares were roasted and the birds were parboiled; it was a disagreeable act for the man who extinguished them: we will never make complaint of him again, since the people were saved.

There were many foxes who were racing throughout the ridges; their tails on their shoulders, [moving] quickly throughout the hills; while the ravens were wailing and the crows were in crisis; the thrushes themselves howled, which is not surprising.

I hope that you will all listen to the song, every living person who lives over here; that you will always be careful how you manage things and that you not set fire to the birds and cause their progeny to bring death upon us (Newton 2015, 217-18).

Fieldwork provides additional evidence of the enduring bonds between people and place in the region. Though none of them chose to take over the farm, Martha Ramey and her siblings would not sell it either. With time the house fell down and the fields filled with trees, but for more than forty years they have held on to the property: “*Bha sinn uileadh measail air, ged nach do dh’ fhuirich gin againn ann. Ach, bha meas mhòr againn air an àite. Tha meas againn air fhathast. Shin carson a chum sin e.* (We were all fond of it, although not one of us stayed there. But we all had a great fondness for the place. We are still fond of it. That’s why we kept it) (Ramey 2014).

While the house where he was raised is also gone and the fields have turned to forest—even the road is virtually impassable now—Allan MacLeod also refused to sell the family property in New Boston. When we spoke from the home he built several kilometers away, MacLeod described the old property longingly and expressed regret he ever had to leave it. On the other side of the island, Anna MacKinnon shared a similar

perspective. Raised along a beautiful but rugged stretch of coast overlooking the Northumberland Strait, MacKinnon and her family moved closer to town when the winters became too difficult in Sight Point. Though the move was only a few kilometers, the mental and emotional distance is fresh decades later:

Bha mi-fhìn cho measail air Rubha an t-Seallaidh. Bha mo chridhe briste dar a dh'fheumadh mi falbh às, ach bha na geamhraidhean, bha iad tuilleadh 's dona a' fuireach shuas a' sìod. 'S cha robh duine ann a dh' fhosgladh a rathad. Bha muinntir Mhìcheal Aonghais, bha iad às deoghaidh falbh. Bha na geamhraidhean, bhiodh poile de shneachda 's a' rathad air a dhùnadh. Dh'fheumadh sinn falbh às. So, bidh mi ga cuimhneachadh (MacKinnon 2009).

I myself was so fond of Sight Point. My heart was broken when I had to leave it, but the winters, they were too bad living up there. And there was no one to open the road. Michael Angus's people, they were after leaving. The winters were—there would be a pile of snow and the road would be closed. We had to leave there. So, I will be remembering it.

As this material demonstrates, outmigration has not necessarily heralded a change in attitudes towards land; nor has it always created an emotional indifference to property cleared and settled generations ago. Scottish Gaels express a complex and highly developed connection to land in the region. As Feld and Basso have argued elsewhere, such bonds are not necessarily broken by distance: "...displacement is no less the source of powerful attachments that are experiences of profound rootedness" (Feld and Basso 1996: 11). Painting a nostalgic picture of life on the farm, Mary Campbell claims the family property continues to hold meaning for relatives living away: "We were rooted in the soil. I mean, without the land—like for instance, members of my family who live in the cities, they say, well, we live in nice houses, you know. But they're not home. Home is here" (Campbell 2015).

'Wild' Allan Bonnar provides a final example. Fifty years ago a government program implemented the relocation of residents of Black Point. Yet the physical loss of

the community did little to break the personal and social bonds residents formed there.

Rooted in memories and a common sense of identity and belonging, a connection remained. Today, as the number of former residents dwindles, Bonnar is committed to purchasing back the land where he was born. In the following, he tells me why:

Well, there's hardly anybody that knows any of them places, or anything like that now. Like I told a guy that was down about the land I'm trying to get.

I said, "When you look at this land and most other people look at this land it's just a bunch of land with fuckin' trees on it and rocks on it. It don't mean nothing to them." But I said, "I can take you to all the different cellars on it, where people are buried on it, what happened here and what happened there, you know. It's no significance to you, but it is to me!"

And I told him that's why I want it. You know what I mean? And, if it goes past me, it's gone. You know what I mean? Nobody else is gonna know anything about it. Nobody's gonna know, well, this is where this house was, this is where this fella went over the bank with the horse, or anything like that. (Bonnar 2016)

Bonnar helps keep a community alive through stories about what once happened there, shared in person and through social media. But that is not enough for him. His desire to purchase the property demonstrates a need to keep those memories grounded in a physical reality. Linking the tangible and intangible, Bonner is alert to the symbiotic relationship that exists between land and people, and the way each derives part of its identity from the other. Ties like these bond people to land around the world. And because of those connections, as long as a sense of place in the region is informed by oral traditions, history and language rooted in Gaelic, there will always be a Gaelic Nova Scotia.

Chapter Eleven

Conclusion

Though they arrived in a region with a long history of human occupation, alive with personal and social meaning, Gaels confronted it as strangers. Its hills and valleys elicited no memories for them; its mountains were mute. Where Mi'kmaq saw a storied landscape, home to thousands of years of history, Gaels saw only vacant land and empty space. But time has a way of changing that. This thesis has explored that process, asking what oral traditions reveal about the relationship settlers and their descendants developed with land in Nova Scotia.

Narratives about emigration and settlement, for example, provide a foundation on which their sense of belonging is built. To begin, immigrants are more in control in Scotland. They make the decision to leave and build the boats to do so. Big Finley even has the chance to satisfy his need for retaliation against his oppressor before leaving. These depictions stand in stark contrast to popular portrayals, informed by romantic ideals, which characterize immigrants as forlorn and defeated. A sense of regional identity is also communicated in these stories, since no one account is common to every location.

A radical change occurs on their arrival to Nova Scotia. Stories about this period convey the sense of fear, intimidation, and unease the Gaels felt. No longer in control, their fate lies in the hands of the Mi'kmaq. Significantly, indigenous residents are not described in racially inferior terms in these stories. In fact, they are very much equal to the Gaels, if not more powerful. This is a significant departure from official depictions, which were often shaped by racist evolutionary theories. But it also allows descendants

to depict colonization in conciliatory terms: a coming together of two equals. In a similar historical obfuscation, Mi'kmaq are said to have consented, or even welcomed, the presence of Gaels in Nova Scotia.

As they shaped social perceptions about land through oral traditions that made their presence in the province seem natural, settlers pushed forward its radical physical transformation. Local tradition stresses the tremendous challenges settlers overcame, underlining the vital role community cohesion and cooperation played in this process. Narratives show women acted as equal partners in this process, providing both moral and physical support. At times counter-hegemonic, this material stresses the tenacity and drive settlers possessed. Taken together, this acts as a powerful antidote to negative perceptions—often internalized by community members—that contradicts stereotypes and offers aspirational models. Frequently rooted in the historical record, narratives like these also help secure a defensible rationale for the presence of Gaels in Nova Scotia. Taken together, material like this reminds us that settlement is as much a psychological process as a physical one.

One of the first ways settlers attempted to appropriate parts of the landscape was by naming them. Whether they are maintained through archival, written or oral means, toponyms collected through this research are consistent in terms of their content. Notwithstanding generations of outmigration, place names suggest residents did not act as a transient population, but were firmly rooted and committed to the places they came to know in Nova Scotia. This material makes clear the close connection generations of residents had to specific elements of the local environment. Place names also

demonstrate that Gaelic remained a vital force in the lives of countless area residents and informed the way generations saw, described and considered their surroundings.

Since most names were never translated, in some ways, the places they describe exist only in Gaelic. By the time a new generation came of age, and began to see and describe the region through English, a different relationship with the land had begun to form. This one sacrificed a depth of knowledge associated with small places for a greater familiarity with a larger geographic expanse. There was no longer always a need to name minor landscape features anew. For this reason many places have once again become anonymous aspects of the landscape, nameless hills and hollows observed from fast moving vehicles; foreign elements in a familiar landscape. Inextricably linked to language and land usage, Gaelic place names were among the first casualties in a change of both. But they have not lost their power completely.

Fieldwork shows that toponyms continue to resonate with some residents, even when their practical purpose as directional markers has been lost. Providing residents with a sense of belonging and connection to place, Gaelic place names are now maintained because of their personal and social connotations. For that reason, the symbiotic relationship between toponyms and other aspects of the oral tradition, stories and songs, for instance, is important to recognize. Taken together, the richness and diversity of this tradition, which survives in remnant form, demonstrates the extent to which a Gaelic sense of identity was imprinted on parts of the province and the ways in which that land gave settlers and their descendants a sense of belonging in Nova Scotia.

Importantly, the attachment to land these names suggests was rooted in personal and social experience. Over time, landscape features were imbued with individual, social

and sacred significance. Fieldwork demonstrates the important role oral traditions play in transmitting a sense of place in this community. Although the world participants describe is physical, many of its most important characteristics relate to the metaphysical. Oral traditions, including legends, supernatural beliefs, personal narratives and oral history, form the basis of a perceptual landscape that overlays a physical one, even making the presence of settlers and their descendants appear predestined. Such perceptions shape the way contemporary residents view the region today. Despite generations of outmigration and high unemployment, for instance, area residents are confident that their ancestors were wise to come to Nova Scotia.

As this material suggests, a sense of belonging in the region has deepened over time; usually focused on defined geographic areas. Mental horizons, grounded in that local experience, were long informed by familiarity with nearby mountains, brooks and people, as opposed to those in other areas. Highly localized identities emerge through the song corpus, reminding us that “To live is to live locally, and to know is first of all to know the places one is in” (Casey in Feld & Basso 1996, 18). Bards have drawn on a long tradition of panegyric poetry to praise their surroundings in ways that express “more than a parochial pride in the local scene” (Dunn 1991, 160). This material shows that immigrants and their descendants quickly adopted the region as their own, coming to appreciate its natural beauty and abundant opportunities. And even if the land they settled was not ideal, nostalgia for a lost homeland is rare in oral tradition. The passage of time and draw of tartanism have done little to inculcate in residents romantic impressions of the Highlands and Islands.

At the same time, few residents are willing to paint an idealistic picture of life in rural Nova Scotia. Many contemporary conversations focus on the physical hardships settlers suffered and the lack of economic opportunities their descendants continue to face. Fieldwork also demonstrates the personal and social repercussions of regional identities predicated on perceptions of land, particularly between the Front and the Rear. The relationship residents have had to land is more complex and complicated than romantic portraits of bucolic, egalitarian communities would suggest. The social stratification residents describe, for example, stands in contrast to the denial of class antimodernism espouses.

This research emphasizes the value of working with local residents to determine how social stratification is understood at the local level. In this case, the weight of evidence suggests residents see economic divisions between the shore and backlands as human constructions, based more on historic circumstance than land quality. In the end, outside perceptions, whether those of nearby residents or historians, have little bearing on how the backlands are seen by those who call them home. Residents use oral traditions to subvert official orthodoxies about the backlands that challenge the dominant narrative about both their productivity and potential.

As this material suggests, however, a connection to specific parts of the landscape was not always oriented towards community. The ability to own land was critical to emigration and settlement in this community. Suggesting the lasting mark dispossession made on the Gaels of Nova Scotia, oral traditions indicate the protection and accumulation of private property became an enduring preoccupation—at times contentious and divisive—in communities otherwised characterized by social cohesion

and bonds of reciprocity. The prominence of this theme makes it clear that residents recognize the negative potential that extreme fixation on land presents. These concerns are made explicit in critiques that claim this tendency has exacerbated outmigration, for instance. This preoccupation is also made clear in stories where ethical possession of land is a prominent theme.

This concern may also provide valuable insight into narratives centred on early encounters with the Mi'kmaq, and why oral traditions emphasize the ethical transfer of land between Mi'kmaq and Scottish Gaels. As residents increasingly come to terms with the historic reality of colonization, recognizing the role their ancestors played in this process, folklorists must be willing to tackle the meaning narratives like these contain since, as Feld and Basso remind us, "...ethnography's stories of place and places are increasingly about contestation" (1999, 5). Far from challenging indigenous claims to land, I would argue this material underscores the profound connection thousands of years of residency provide the Mi'kmaq. After all, if one group can feel this connected to land after two hundred years, imagine what another feels after time immemorial.

Fieldwork with contemporary residents also challenges notions of out-migration as a product of cultural wanderlust or poor quality land. This research demonstrates how a loss of cultural and linguistic confidence may have exacerbated a global trend. My work argues that rural depopulation in Gaelic Nova Scotia cannot be understood solely within an economic framework, nor does it necessarily represent an indictment against land. Touching on issues of that extended far beyond local shores, including globalism and loss of cultural and linguistic diversity, this material shows how local residents rationalize land abandonment. Mediating between the local and the global, local

traditions emphasize the social disparity between rural and urban life. More importantly, fieldwork shows that residents have continued to feel a strong connection to land despite their compulsion to leave it. In many cases, that connection to land remains vital to their construction of identity and their sense of belonging.

In the end, immigrants and their descendants molded the landscape of Nova Scotia: clearing forests, creating and cultivating fields. In the process, they too were transformed. Settlers and their descendants came to feel at home in a new environment; getting to know its shadows, smells and seasons. Stories and songs evolved to reflect these new surroundings and identity. Gaelic language, culture, and history shaped the way residents interpreted their environment and fostered a sense of belonging in Nova Scotia. In so doing, a landscape that once seemed devoid of meaning was filled with personal and cultural significance. Intimidating expanses of land took on an individual and welcoming identity. With time, the foreign became familiar and the familiar became home.

References:

- Allen, Barbara and Thomas J. Schlereth, ed. 1990. *Senses of place; American regional cultures*. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press.
- Allison, David. 1916. *History of Nova Scotia*, 3 Vols. Halifax: A. W. Bowen and Co.
- Allport, Gordon and Leo Postman. 1946. An analysis of rumor. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 10, 501–517.
- Anderson, Benedict. 1991. *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. New York: Verso Books.
- Appadurai, Arjun. 1990. Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy. *Theory Culture Society* 7; 295-310.
- Arntzen, Sven. 2003. Landscape and meaning. In *Tensional landscapes*, ed. Backhaus and Murungi, 79-102. Oxford: Lexington Books.
- Augé, Marc. 1995. *Non-places: An introduction to supermodernity*. Trans. John Howe. New York: Verso.
- Baron, Robert. 1993. Theorizing Folklore: Toward New Perspectives on the Politics of Culture. *Western Folklore* 52, no. 2/4, (April-October): 227-245.
- Basso, Keith. 1984. Stalking with stories: Names, places, and moral narratives among the Western Apache. In *Text, play and story: the construction and reconstruction of self and society*, ed. E. Bruner, 19-53. Washington: American Ethnology Society
- . 1984. “Stalking with Stories”: Names, Places, and Moral Narratives among the Western Apache. In *Text, Play, and Story: The Construction and Reconstruction of Self and Society*, ed. Edward M. Bruner: 19-55. Washington, DC: American Ethnological Society.
- . 1996. *Wisdom sits in places: Landscape and language among the Western Apache*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.
- Bauman, Richard. 1986. *Story, performance and event: Contextual studies of oral narrative*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Beck, Callum, n.d.. Tracing traditions, Part 1: ‘The religion of the yellow stick’ and the MacLeans of Coll. Unpublished manuscript.
- Bender, Barbara and Margot Winer, ed. 2001. *Contested landscapes; Movement, exile and place*. New York: Berg.
- Bender, Barbara. 2001. Introduction. In *Contested Landscapes: Movement, Exile and Place* Bender, ed. Barbara Bender and Margot Winer, 1–18. Oxford and New York: Berg.

- . 2006. Place and Landscape. In *Handbook of material culture*, ed. Chris Tilley, Webb Keane, Susanne Küchler, Mike Rowlands, and Patricia Spyer, 303-314. London: Sage.
- . 1989. *The last stronghold: Scottish Gaelic traditions in Newfoundland*. St John's: Breakwater Books.
- Bennett, Margaret. 1996. One and Two Percent: Scottish Gaelic Folklore Studies in Newfoundland and Quebec. *Lore and Language* 15, no. 1—2: 128—140.
- . 2003. *Oatmeal and the catechism: Scottish Gaelic settlers in Quebec*. Edinburgh: John Donald.
- Bittermann, Rusty. 1988. The hierarchy of the soil: land and labour in a 19th century Cape Breton community. *Acadiensis* 18, no. 1 (Autumn): 33-55.
- . 1993. Farm Households and Wage Labour in the Northeastern Maritimes in the Early 19th Century, *Labour/Le Travail* 31 (Spring):13-45.
- Black, Mary. 1975. Cape Breton's early roads. *Nova Scotia Quarterly* 5, no. 3 (September): 277-295.
- Blair, Rev. Duncan. 2013. *Parting, prophecy, poetry: Rev. Duncan Blair (1815-1893) in MacTalla*. Trans. and ed. John A. MacPherson and Michael Linkletter. Sydney: Cape Breton University Press.
- Bourinot, John G. 1892. *Historical descriptive account of the Island of Cape Breton*. Montreal: W. Foster Brown.
- Brandes, Stanley. 1980. *Metaphors of masculinity: Sex and status in Andalusian folklore*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania.
- Brett, Bev. 2017. *Letters to Mac-Talla from John Munro, A Cape Breton Gael in New Zealand 1894-1902*. Trans. by John Alick MacPherson. N.p.
- Bridgeville Women's Institute. 1973. *A' Gleann Boidheach (beautiful Valley)*. N.p.: Bridgeville Women's Institute.
- Brody, Hugh. 1976. Land occupancy: Inuit perceptions. In *Inuit land use and occupancy project. Volume one. Land use and occupancy*, ed. M. M. Freeman, 185-242. Ottawa: Department of Indian and Northern Affairs.
- . 1981. *Inishkillane: Change and decline in the west of Ireland*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre.
- . 1982. *Maps and dreams*. New York: Pantheon Books.

- . 2001. *The other side of Eden*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Brown, Richard. 1869. *A history of the island of Cape Breton, with some account of the discovery and settlement of Canada, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland*. London: Sampson Low, Son and Marston.
- Brown, Thomas J. 1922. *Place Names of the Province of Nova Scotia*. Halifax: Royal Print and Litho. Ltd.
- Bruford, Allan, and Donald Archie MacDonald. 1994. *Scottish traditional tales*. Edinburgh: Polygon.
- Brunvand, Jan Harold. 1981. *The Vanishin Hitchhiker: American Urban Legends and their Meanings*. New York: Norton.
- Bumsted, J. M. 1979. Captain John MacDonald and the island. *Island Magazine*, no.6 (spring–summer 1979): 15-20.
- . 1982. *The people's clearance: Highland emigration to British North America, 1770-1815*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- . 1999. Scots. *Encyclopedia of Canada's peoples*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Calder, Jenni. 2013. *Lost in the backwoods: Scots and the North American wilderness*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Calloway, Colin. 2008. *White people, Indians and Highlanders: Tribal peoples and colonial encounters in Scotland and America*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Cameron, Hazel. 1972. *Avondale and its people: Lest they be forgotten*. N.p.
- Cameron, James M. 1972. *Pictou County's history*. Kentville, NS: Pictou County Historical Society.
- Cameron, William. 1999. *Drummer on foot*. Ed. Don MacFarlane and R. A. MacLean. Antigonish, NS: Casket Printing and Publishing Ltd.
- Campbell, D. F. and R. A. MacLean. 1974. *Beyond the Atlantic Roar*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart.
- Campbell, Hector. 1981. *Luigean Eachainn Nill*. Ed. Margaret MacDonell and John Shaw. Stornoway, UK: Acair.
- Campbell, John Lorne, ed. 1990. *Songs remembered in exile: Traditional Gaelic songs from Nova Scotia recorded in Cape Breton and Antigonish County in 1937, with an account of the aauses of Hebridean emigration, 1790-1835*. Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press.

- , ed. 1998. *The book of Barra*. Stornoway: Acair.
- Campbell, Patrick. 1793. *Travels in the interior inhabited parts of North America in the years 1791 & 1792*. Edinburgh: n.p.
- Campbell, Peter MacKenzie. 1978. *Highland settlement on the Bras d'Or*. Antigonish, NS: Casket Printing and Publishing Company.
- Campey, Lucille. 2004. *After the Hector: the Scottish pioneers of Nova Scotia and Cape Breton, 1773 – 1852*. Toronto: Natural History Books.
- . 2008. *An unstoppable Force: The Scottish exodus to Canada*. Toronto: Natural Heritage Books.
- Caplan, Ronald, ed. 1988. *Cape Breton lives: A book from Cape Breton's magazine*. St. John's, NL: Breakwater Books.
- , ed. 2000. *As true as I'm sitting here*. Sydney: Breton Books.
- Carpenter, Carole. 1979. *Many voices: A study of folklore activities in Canada and their role in Canadian culture*. Canadian Centre For Folk Culture Studies, Paper no 26. National Museum of Man.
- Carroll, Michael P. 1999. *Irish pilgrimage: Holy wells and popular Catholic devotion*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Casey, Edward. 1998. *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History*. Berkeley: University of California.
- Cashman, Ray. 2006. Critical nostalgia and material culture in Northern Ireland. *The Journal of American Folklore* 119, No. 472 (Spring): 137-160.
- Cazden, Courtney and Dell Hymes. 1978. Narrative Thinking and Story-telling Rights: A Folklorist's Clue to a Critique of Education. *Keystone Folklore* 22, no. 1-2: 24-36.
- Chamberlin, J. E. 2003. *If this is your land, where are your stories? Reimagining home and sacred space*. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press.
- Ching, Barbara and Gerald W. Creed. 1997. *Knowing your place: Rural identity and cultural hierarchy*. New York: Routledge.
- Chittenden, Varick A. 2006. "Put your very special place on the north country map!": Community participation in cultural landmarking. *Journal of American Folklore* 119, no. 471 (Winter): 47-65.

- Collignon, Beatrice. 2006. Inuit place names and sense of place. In *Critical Inuit Studies: An Anthology of Contemporary Arctic Ethnography*, ed. Stern, P. and L. Stevenson. Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press.
- Conn, Stephanie. 2012. *Carn mor de chlachan beaga/A large cairn from small stones: Multivocality and memory in Cape Breton Gaelic singing*. PhD diss., University of Toronto.
- Cox, Lori Vitale. 1997. Engineered consent: the relocation of Black Point, a small Gaelic fishing community in Northern Cape Breton Island. PhD diss., Dalhousie University.
- Craig, David. 1997. *On the crofter's trail: In search of the clearance Highlanders*. Sydney, Australia: Pimlico.
- Creates, Marlene. 1997. *Places of Presence: Newfoundland kin and ancestral land, Newfoundland, 1989-1991*. St. John's: Killick Press.
- Creighton, Helen and Calum MacLeod, ed. 1964. *Gaelic songs in Nova Scotia*. Ottawa: National Museum of Canada.
- Creighton, Helen. 1976. *Folklore of Lunenburg County*. Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson.
- Cresswell, Tim. 2013. *Place: a short introduction*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Crowell, Aron and Estelle Ooozevaseuk. The St. Lawrence Island Famine and Epidemic, 1878–80: A Yupik Narrative in Cultural and Historical Context. In *Living with Stories*, ed. William Schneider and Aron Crowell, 36-67. Logan: Utah State University Press.
- Cruikshank, Julie. 1990. *Life lived like a story: Life stories of three Yukon native elders*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.
- . 1998. *The social life of stories: Narrative and knowledge in the Yukon Territory*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.
- Cubitt, Geoffrey. 2007. *History and memory*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Cumming, Peter, Heather MacLeod, and Linda Strachan. 1984. *The Story of Framboise*. Framboise, NS: St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church.
- Davey, William, and Richard MacKinnon. 2001. Nicknaming patterns and traditions among Cape Breton coal miners. *Acadiensis* 30, no. 2 (Spring): 71-83.
- Davie, Jody Shapiro. 1995. *Women in the presence: Constructing community and seeking spirituality in mainline Protestantism*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Dawson, Robert MacGregor. 1960. Place names in Nova Scotia. *Onomastica XIX*. Winnipeg: Ukrainian Free Academy of Sciences.

- DeFréine, Séan. 1978. *The Great Silence: The Study of a Relationship between Language and Nationality*. Dublin: Mercier Press.
- Delargy, J. H. 1945. The Gaelic Story-teller. *Proceedings of the British Academy* 31: 3-47.
- Dembling, Jonathan. 2006. The Gaelic Revival in Nova Scotia. In *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, 18/19, ed. Patricia A. Malone, Laura J. Radiker, Michael Linkletter, Diana Luft & Ian Richmond, 11-33. Cambridge, MA: Department of Celtic Languages and Literatures, Harvard University.
- . 2006. Gaelic in Canada: New evidence from an old census. *Cànan & Cùltar/Language and Culture: Rannsachadh na Gàidhlig* 3, ed. Wilson MacLeod, James E. Fraser and Anja Gunderloch, 203-214. Edinburgh: Dunedin.
- Dickie, R. E. 1957. Problems in Nova Scotia granting of lands and surveying. *The Canadian Surveyor* 2, no. 6: 41-45.
- Dimock, Celia. n.d. *Children of the shieling*. Sydney, NS: Lynk Printing Services.
- Doherty, Elizabeth Anne. 1996. The Paradox of the Periphery: Evolution of the Cape Breton fiddle tradition c1928-1995. PhD diss., University of Limerick.
- . 2015. *Cape Breton fiddle companion*. Sydney: Cape Breton University Press.
- Dorson, Richard M. 1968. *The British folklorists: A History*. London: Routledge & Keegan Paul.
- . 1971. Sources for the Traditional History of the Scottish Highlands and Western Islands. *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 8, no. 2/3 (Aug.-Dec):147-184.
- Doucette, Laurel. 1980. *Cultural retention and demographic change: Studies of the Hebridean Scots in the Eastern Townships of Quebec*. Ottawa: National Museums of Canada.
- Dunbar, Robert. 2008. The Poetry of the Emigrant Generation. *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* 64: 22-125.
- Dundes, Alan. 1999. *International Folkloristics: Classic Contributions by the Founders of Folklore*. Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Dunn, Charles. 1991. *Highland settler: a portrait of the Scottish Gael in Cape Breton and eastern Nova Scotia*. Wreck Cove, Nova Scotia: Breton Books.
- Durie, Alastair, Ian S. Yeoman and Una McMahon-Beattie. 2006. How the history of Scotland creates a sense of place. *Place Branding* 2, no. 1 (January): 43-52.
- Durkheim, Emile. 1951. *Suicide: A study in Sociology*. Glencoe, IL: The Free Press

- Durkheim, Emile. 1972. *Emile Durkheim: Selected writings*. Ed. Anthony Giddens. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Emrich, Duncan. 1949. Letter to Herald Spivacke, June 22. Quoted in *MacEdward Leach and the Songs of Atlantic Canada*. Dept. of Folklore, Memorial University of Newfoundland, <http://www.mun.ca/folklore/leach/context/history.htm> (accessed April 16, 2017).
- Ennals, Peter and Deryck Holdsworth. 1988. The cultural landscape of the Maritime provinces. In *Geographical Perspectives on the Maritime Provinces*, ed. E. E. Douglas Day, 1-14. Halifax: St. Mary's University.
- Ericksen, Thomas Hylland. 2001. *Small Places, Big Issues: An Introduction to Social and Cultural Anthropology*. London: Pluto Press.
- Evans, E. Estyn. 1967. *Mourne country: Landscape and life in South Down*. Dundalk: Dundalgan Press.
- . 1996. *Ireland and the Atlantic heritage: Selected writings*. Dublin: Lilliput Press.
- Farmer, Jared. 2008. *On Zion's mount: Mormons, Indians, and the American landscape*. Boston: Harvard University Press.
- Fauset, Arthur Huff. 1931. *Folklore from Nova Scotia*. New York: American Folklore Society.
- Feintuch, Burt. 2001. Longing for community. *Western Folklore* 60, no. 2/3 (Spring-Summer): 149-161.
- Feintuch, Burt. 2004. The conditions for Cape Breton fiddle music: The Social and Economic Setting of a Regional Soundscape. *Ethnomusicology* 48, No. 1 (Winter) 73-104.
- Feld, Steven and Keith Basso. 1996. *Senses of place: a short introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Fergusson, Charles Bruce, ed. 1967. *Place-names and places of Nova Scotia*. Halifax: The Public Archives of Nova Scotia.
- Fergusson, Donald, ed. 1977. *Fad air falbh as Innse Gall (Beyond the Hebrides)*. Halifax: Lawson Graphics Atlantic Ltd.
- Forbes, Alexander Penrose. Scottish religious houses abroad. *The Edinburgh Review*, 119: 168-202.
- Frake, Charles O. 1996. Pleasant Places, Past Times, and Sheltered Identity in Rural East Anglia. In *Senses of Place*, ed. Feld, Steven and Keith H. Basso, 229-257. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press.

- Frampton, Kenneth. 1991. Critical Regionalism Revisited. In *Critical Regionalism: The Pomono Meeting Proceedings*, ed. Spyros Amourgis: 34-39. Pomona, CA: College of Environmental Design, California State Polytechnic University.
- Fraser, Mary. 2009. *Folklore of Nova Scotia*. Halifax: Formac.
- Fraser, Barrie. n.d. *Lake Ainslie genealogy and history*. Unpublished manuscript.
- Friedl, Erika. 1975. The folktale as cultural comment. *Asian Folklore Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 2, 127.
- . 2004. Stories as ethnographic dilemma in longitudinal research. *Anthropology and Humanism Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (June): 5–21.
- Gabbert, Lisa and Paul Jordan-Smith. 2007. Introduction: Space, Place, Emergence. *Western Folklore* 66, no. 3/4 (Summer—Fall): 217-232
- Geertz, Clifford. 1973. *The interpretation of cultures*. New York: Basic Books.
- Gentilcore, R. Louis. 1956. The Agricultural background of settlement in Eastern Nova Scotia. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 46, no. 4 (December): 378-404.
- Gesner, Abraham. 1836. *Remarks on the geology and mineralogy of Nova Scotia*. Halifax: Gossip and Coade.
- . 1995. *The best of Abraham Gesner*. Ed. Allison Mitcham. Hansport, NS: Lancelot Press.
- Gibson, John G. 1998. *Traditional Gaelic bagpiping, 1745-1945*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press.
- . 2002. *Old and New World Highland bagpiping*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press.
- Giddens, Anthony. 1990. *The Consequences of Modernity*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Glassie, Henry. 1969. *Patterns in the material folk culture of the eastern United States*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- . 1975. *Folk housing in Middle Virginia: A structural analysis of historic artifacts*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press.
- . 1982. *Passing the time in Ballymenone: Culture and history of an Ulster community*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Glendale Gaelic and Historical Society. 2002. *Cuir is buain: a genealogical history of Glendale and neighboring communities*. N.p.: Glendale Gaelic and Historical Society.
- Goffman, Erving. 1974. *Frame analysis: An essay in the organization of experience*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.

- Graham, Brian, ed. 1997. *In search of Ireland: a cultural geography*. New York: Routledge.
- Graham, Glenn. 2006. *Cape Breton fiddle: Making and maintaining tradition*. Sydney: Cape Breton University Press.
- Griffith, James. 1992. *Beliefs and holy places: A spiritual geography of the Pimeria Alta*. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press.
- Groger, Lisa. 1983. Growing old with or without it: The meaning of land in a southern rural community. *Research on Aging* 5, 4 (December): 511-526.
- Groth, Paul and Todd W. Bressie. 1997. *Understanding ordinary landscapes*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Haliburton, Thomas C. 1829. *A historical and statistical account of Nova Scotia*. Halifax: Joseph Howe.
- Halpert, Herbert. 1947. Folktales and legends from the New Jersey pines: a collection and a study. PhD diss., Indiana University.
- Halpert, Herbert, and John Widdowson. 1996. *Folktales of Newfoundland: The resilience of the oral tradition*. St. John's NL: Breakwater.
- Hamilton, William B. 1996. *Place names of Atlantic Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Hayden, Dolores. 1995. *The power of place: Urban landscapes as public history*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.
- Hazard, Ethel. 2003. Mapping cultures, histories, and economic development: Anthropology and the Columbian Caribbean. In *Tensional landscapes: The dynamics of boundaries and placements*, ed. Gary Backhaus and John Murungi, 19-36. New York: Lexington Books.
- Head, Lesley. Cultural landscapes. 2010. In *The Oxford handbook of material cultural studies*, ed. Dan Hicks and Mary C. Beaudry, 427-429. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Helleland, Botolv. 2012. Place names and Identities. *Oslo Studies in Language* 4, 2: 95-116.
- Hillers, Barbara. 2007. Storytelling and the international folktale in Scotland. In *Scottish life and society; A compendium of Scottish ethnology*, ed. J. Beech, O. Hand, F. MacDonald, M. A. Mulhern and J. Weston, 153-170. Edinburgh: John Donald.
- Hirsh, Eric and Michael O'Hanlon. 1995. *The anthropology of landscape*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Holbek, Bengt. 1987. *Interpretation of Fairy Tales: Danish Folklore in a European Perspective*. Helsinki : Suomalainen Tiedekatemia.
- Hornborg, Anne-Christine. 2008. *Mi'kmaq Landscapes: From Animism to Sacred Ecology*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate.
- Hornsby, Stephen John. 1986. *An historical geography of Cape Breton Island in the nineteenth century*. PhD diss., University of British Columbia.
- . 1992. *Nineteenth-century Cape Breton: a historical geography*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press.
- Hoskins, William George. 2014. *The making of the English landscape*. Dorchester, UK: Little Toller Books.
- Houston, R. A. 1985. *Scottish literacy and the Scottish identity; Illiteracy and society in Scotland and Northern England 1600-1800*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Howe, Joseph. 1973. *Travel sketches of Nova Scotia*. Ed. M. G. Parks. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Hufford, Mary. 1986. *One space, many places: Folklife and land use in New Jersey's Pinelands National Reserve*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- . 1994. *Conserving culture: A discourse on heritage*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- . 1990. "One reason God Made Trees": The Form and Ecology of the Barnegat Bay Sneakbox. In *Sense of Place: American Regional Cultures*, ed. Barbara Allen and Thomas J. Schlereth: 40-57. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky.
- . 2002. Interrupting the Monologue: Folklore, Ethnography, and Critical Regionalism. *Journal of Appalachian Studies* 8, 1: 62-78.
- . 2003. Knowing Ginseng: The Social Life of an Appalachian Root. *Cahier de Littérature Orale* 53-54: 265-291.
- Hunter, James. 1976. *Making of a Crofting Community*. Edinburgh: John Donald.
- . 1994. *A dance called America: The Scottish Highlands the United States and Canada*. Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing.
- Hymes, Dell. 1981. *In vain I tried to tell you: Essays in Native American ethnopoetics*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- . 1985. Language, Memory, and Selective Performance: Cultee's "Salmon's Myth" as Twice Told to Boas. *The Journal of American Folklore* 98, no 390 (October-December): 391-434.

- Ivakhiv, Adrian. 2005. Colouring Cape Breton "Celtic": Topographies of culture and identity in Cape Breton Island. *Ethnologies* 27, no. 2 (Fall): 107-136.
- Ives, Sandy. 1974. *The tape-recorded interview; A manual for field workers in folklore and oral history*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press.
- Jackson, J. B. 1984. *Discovering the vernacular landscape*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Jackson, Kenneth. 1949. More tales from Port Hood, Nova Scotia. *Scottish Gaelic Studies* 6, 179-188.
- Johnson, Matthew. 2007. *Ideas of landscape*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Johnson, Samuel. 1837. *The World of Samuel Johnson*. Ed. Arthur Murphy. New York: George Dearborn.
- Johnston, Angus Anthony. 1960. *A history of the Catholic Church in Eastern Nova Scotia: 1611-1827*. Vol. 1. Antigonish: St. Francis Xavier University Press.
- Johnstone, Barbara. 1990. *Stories, community and place: Narratives from Middle America*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Johnston, Barbara Rose. 1995. Human Rights and the Environment. *Human Ecology* 23, no. 2: 111-123.
- Jones, Suzi. 1976. Regionalization: A Rhetorical Strategy. *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 13, No. 1: 105-120
- Karpeles, Maud. 1971. *Folk Songs from Newfoundland*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Kennedy, Michael. 1998. The Last Gael: Poignant, Gritty, Realism. *Am Bràighe*. (Spring): 9.
- . 1999. Lochaber no more: a critical examination of Highland emigration mythology. In *Myth, migration and the making of memory*, ed. Marjory Harper and Michael E. Vance, 267-297. Halifax: Fernwood.
- . 2002. *Gaelic Nova Scotia: an economic, cultural and social impact study*. Halifax: Nova Scotia Museum.
- Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara. 2003. Kodak moments, flashbulb memories: Reflections on 9/11. *The Drama Review* 47 no. 1 (Spring): 11-48.
- Kniffen, Fred. 1986 Folk housing: Key to diffusion. *Common places: Readings in American vernacular architecture*, ed. Dell Upton and John Michael Vlach, 3-26, Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press.

- . 1990. *The study of folk architecture, in cultural diffusion and landscapes: Selections by Fred B. Kniffen*, ed. H. Jesse Walker and Randall A. Detro. 35-47, Baton Rouge, LA: Geoscience Publications.
- Kockel, Ullrich, ed. 1995. *Landscape, heritage and identity: Case studies in Irish ethnography*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.
- Kovach, Margaret. 2009. *Indigenous methodologies; Characteristics, conversations, and contexts*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Kunstler, James. 1993. Geography of nowhere: *The rise and decline of American's man-made landscape*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Lassiter, Luke. 2005. *The Chicago guide to collaborative ethnography*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lawless, Elaine. 1992. "I was afraid someone like you ... an outsider ... would misunderstand": Negotiating interpretive differences between ethnographers and subjects. *Journal of American Folklore* 105, no. 416 (Spring): 302-315.
- Lawson, James P. 1991. Passengers on the Alexander. *The Island Magazine* 29 (Spring/Summer): 34-39.
- Leach, MacEdward. 1957. Celtic tales from Cape Breton. In *Studies in Folklore*, ed. W. E. Richmond, 40-54. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Lee, Henry. 1920. *History of Clan Donald*. New York: R. L. Polk.
- Leyland, Janet. 1995. Outposts of the Gael. In *Landscape heritage and identity: Case studies in Irish Ethnography*, ed. Ullrich Kockel. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press. 47-92.
- Linkletter, Michael. 2006. Bu dual dha sin (That was his birthright): Gaelic scholar Alexander MacLean Sinclair (1840-1924). PhD diss., Harvard University.
- Lockwood, Anthony. 1818. *A brief description of Nova Scotia*. London: N.p.
- Lowenthal, David. 1979. Age and artifact, dilemmas of appreciation. In *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes*, ed. D. S. Meinig, 109-111. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- . 1986. *The past is a foreign country*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 1997. European landscape transformations: The rural residue. In *Understanding ordinary landscapes*, ed. Paul Groth and Todd W. Bressie, 180-188. New Haven: Yale University Press.

- Lundy, Derek. 2006. *The bloody red hand: A journey through truth, myth and terror in Northern Ireland*. Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf.
- MacAdam, Donald. 1915. Souvenir of a centenary: 100th anniversary, first visit of a Catholic bishop celebrated at Christmas Island, August 24th, 1915. Sydney: MacAdam Printing Co. Ltd.
- MacDonald, A. D. 1953. *Mabou pioneers : a genealogical tracing of some pioneer families who settled in Mabou and district*. N.p.
- MacDonald, Colin S. 1932. Early Highland Emigration to Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. Unpublished paper read before the Nova Scotia Historical Society, Amherst, NS. November 4. MG 100, Vol. 181, no. 43. Nova Scotia Archives.
- MacDonald, D. 1996. *Cape North and vicinity pioneer families: History and chronicles, including Pleasant Bay, Bay St. Lawrence, Aspy Bay, White Point, New Haven*. Reprint: nfi. (Orig. pub. 1933)
- MacDonald, Donald Archie. 1982. Fieldwork: collecting oral literature. In *Folklore and folklife*, ed. Richard M. Dorson, 407-430. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- MacDonald, J. W. 1876. *History of Antigonish County*. Np.
- MacDonald, Jeff. 1992. *Bràigh na h-Aibhne: Iarmad mo shluaigh*. Bachelor's thesis, St. Francis Xavier University.
- . Nd. The Celtic colours collection. Cranford Publishing's Website. Accessed April 17, 2017. https://www.cranfordpub.com/celtic-colours/goiridh_brian_BlueMountain.htm.
- MacDonald, Shamus Y. 2013. Micro-toponymy in Gaelic Nova Scotia: some examples from central Cape Breton. In *Celts in the Americas*, ed. Michael Newton, 209-217. Sydney: Cape Breton University Press.
- MacDonald, Winifred and Joe Lawrence MacDonald NicDhomhnull [Una S. agus Ioseph L. MacDhomnull]. 1992. *Bhothasdal Sleagh agus na-Orain*. Unpublished manuscript.
- MacDonell, Margaret. 1982. *The emigrant experience: Songs of the Highland emigrants in North America*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- MacDougall, Hector. 1939. *Smeòrach nan cnoc 's nan gleann*. Ed. Bernard Gillis and Patrick J. Nicholson. Glasgow: Alexander MacLaran.
- MacDougall, John L. 1922. *History of Inverness County, Nova Scotia*. Truro, NS: News Publishing Company.

- MacDougall, Robert. 1998. *The emigrant's guide to North America*. Ed. Elizabeth Thompson. Toronto: Natural Heritage Books.
- MacEachen, Frances. 1995/96. "Cape Breton's North Shore: A Place for All Seasons". *Am Bràighe: A Celtic Newspaper*, 10-11.
- MacGillivray, Rev. Ronald. 1943 [1891-92]. The County of Antigonish. *The Casket*. October 7.
- . 1943 [1891-92]. The County of Antigonish. *The Casket*. November 25.
- MacInnes, Daniel W. 1973. What can be said of those who remain behind? A historic, cultural and situational perspective on the Poplar Grove Scot. Master's thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland.
- . English/Gàidhlig road signs in former Gàidhealtachd areas of Eastern Nova Scotia: an initiative seemingly missing its referents. Paper presented at Trends in Toponymy Conference. University of Edinburgh. June 2010.
- . The choice of English: Nova Scotia Gaels following the 1901 census. Paper presented at the Celts in the Americas Conference. Antigonish, Nova Scotia. June 2011.
- MacInnes, John. 2006. *Dùthchas nan Gàidheal: Selected Essays of John MacInnes*. Ed. Michael Newton. Edinburgh: Birlinn.
- MacIntyre, Joanne. 2013. Liner notes. *Craobh a Mhathain*. CD.
- MacIsaac, Flora. 2015. *The Bourinot Road*. Unpublished manuscript.
- MacIsaac, Teresa. 2006. *A better life: A portrait of Highland women in Nova Scotia*. Sydney: Cape Breton University Press.
- MacKay, Donald. 1980. *Scotland farewell: The people of the Hector*. Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited.
- Mackay, Rebecca. 2013. *Every nook and cranny: Place names, Raasay, Rona, Fladda and Eilean Taighe, Part 1*. Surrey, UK: Grosvernor House Publishing Ltd.
- MacKay, William. 1914. *Urquhart and Glenmoriston: Olden Times in a Highland Parish*. Inverness: The Northern Counties Newspaper and Printing and Publishing Company Ltd. (Orig. pub. 1893.)
- MacKenzie, A. A. 2003. *Scottish lights: Popular essays on Cape Breton and Eastern Nova Scotia*. Wreck Cove: Breton Books.
- MacKenzie, Archibald A. 1926. *Historical sketch of Christmas Island parish*. N.p.
- MacKenzie, Michael B. 1984. *Reflections of yesteryear*. Christmas Island, NS: MacKenzie Books.

- . 1988. *Tracks across the Maritimes: True stories, old and new*. Christmas Island, NS: MacKenzie Books.
- MacKinnon, Kathleen Lamont. 1964. A short study of the history and traditions of Highland Scot in Nova Scotia. Masters diss., St. Francis Xavier University.
- MacKinnon, Richard. 2009. *Discovering Cape Breton folklore*. Sydney: Cape Breton University Press.
- MacKinnon, Robert Alexander. 1991. The historical geography of agriculture in Nova Scotia, 1851-1951. PhD diss., University of British Columbia.
- MacLaren, George. 1955. *The Pictou book*. New Glasgow, NS: Hector Publishing Company.
- MacLean, Charles. 1998. *Island at the Edge of the World: The Story of St. Kilda*. Edinburgh: Canongate.
- MacLeod, Alistair. 1977. Inverness County: From Highland to Highland and Island to Island. In *Mabou Pioneer II*, Mabou Pioneer Committee: vii-xvi. Halifax: Formac.
- MacLeòid, Calum Iain. 1969. *Sgialachdan a Albainn Nuaidh : air an cruinneachadh's air an sgrìobhadh*. Glaschu: Gairm.
- MacLean, Alex D. 1939. *The pioneers of Washabuckt*. Baddeck. Unpublished Manuscript.
- MacLean, Angus Hector. 1976. *God and the devil at Seal Cove*. Halifax: Petheric Press.
- MacLean, Calum. 1959. *The Highlands*. London: B. T. Batsford Ltd.
- MacLean, M. C. 1980. Cape Breton a half century ago. In *Cape Breton historical essays*, ed. Don MacGillivray and Brian Tennyson, 66-75. Sydney: College of Cape Breton Press.
- MacLean, Vincent W. 2014. *These were my people, Washabuck: An anecdotal history*. Sydney: Cape Breton University Press.
- MacLellan, Duncan Hugh. 2004. *An Inis Àigh: My life on Margaree Island*. Halifax: Margaree Island Publishing.
- MacLellan, Lauchie. 2000. *Brìgh an òrain: A story in every song*. Ed. John Shaw. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- MacLennan, Gordon. 1984. Bòcan Brook. *Bèaloideas* 52, 1-8.
- MacLeod, C. I N. 1974. *Stories from Nova Scotia*. Halifax: Formac.

- MacLeod, Heather. 1995. Past nature: Public accounts of Nova Scotia's landscape. Master's thesis, Saint Mary's University.
- MacLeod, Morag. 2007. Collectors of Gaelic song. In *Scottish life and society; A compendium of Scottish ethnology*, ed. J. Beech, O. Hand, F. MacDonald, M. A. Mulhern and J. Weston, 440-450. Edinburgh: John Donald.
- MacMhuirich, Iain. 1929. Beinn an Fhuarain. *Teachdaire nan Gaidheal* 2, (October): 7.
- MacMillan, Allan J. 1987. *To the hill of Boisdale: A short history and a genealogical tracing of the pioneer families of Boisdale, Cape Breton, and the surrounding areas*. Sydney: Music Hill Publications.
- . 2001. *A west wind to East Bay: A short history and a genealogical tracing of the Pioneer Families of the East Bay area of Cape Breton*. Sydney: Music Hill Publications.
- MacNeil, Alan R. 1986. Cultural stereotypes and Highland farming in Eastern Nova Scotia. 1827-1861. *Histoire sociale-Social History* 19 (May), 39-56.
- MacNeil, Joe Neil and John. 1987. *Tales until dawn: the world of a Cape Breton Gaelic storyteller*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- MacNeil, Neil. 1998. *The Highland heart in Nova Scotia*. Wreck Cove, NS: Breton Books.
- MacNeil, S. R. 2004. *All call Iona home*. Halifax: Formac.
- MacQuarrie, John R. 1975. *Lansdowne sketches: Battery Hill, Wilkins Grant, Upper New Lairg*. Oxford Journal; Oxford, NS.
- Manny, Louise and James Reginald Wilson. 1968. *Songs of Miramichi*. Fredericton, NB: n.p.
- Martin, Charles. 1984. *Hollybush: Folk building and social change in an Appalachian community*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press.
- Masson, D. 1873. The Gael in the Far West. *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* 3: 26-45.
- McIntosh, Alastair. 2004. *Soil and soul: people versus corporate power*. London: Aurum Press Limited.
- McKay, Ian. 1992. Tartanism triumphant: the construction of Scottishness in Nova Scotia, 1933-1954. *Acadiensis* 21, no 2 (Spring): 5-47.
- . 1994. *The quest of the folk: Antimodernism and cultural selection in twentieth century Nova Scotia*. Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

- McLeod, Wilson. 2003. Gaelic poetry as historical source: some problems and possibilities. In *Ireland (Ulster) Scotland: Concepts, contexts and comparisons*, ed. Edna Longley, Eamonn Hughes and Des O'Rawe, 171-179. Belfast: Ollscoil na Banríona.
- Meek, Donald. 1996. *The Scottish Highlands: The Churches and Gaelic Culture*. Geneva: World Council of Churches.
- Melin, Mats. 2015. *One with the music: Cape Breton step dance tradition and transmission*. Sydney: Cape Breton University Press.
- Merton, R. K. 1938. Social structure and anomie. *American sociological review* 3, no. 5 (October): 672-682.
- Mertz, Elizabeth Ellen. 1982. No burden to carry: Cape Breton pragmatics and metapragmatics. PhD diss., Duke University.
- . 1989. Sociolinguistic creativity: Cape Breton Gaelic's linguistic 'tip.' Sociolinguistic creativity: Cape Breton Gaelic's linguistic "tip". In *Investigating obsolescence*. Ed. Nancy Dorian, 103–116. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Messenger, John C. 1969. *Innis Beag, isle of Ireland*. New York: Holt, Rineheart and Winston.
- Morgan, Robert J. 2008. *Rise again! The story of Cape Breton Island; book one*. Sydney, NS: Breton Books.
- Morrison, Murdoch. 1931. *Orain Fuinn is Cladaich/Gaelic Poems and Songs*. Glasgow: Alexander MacLaren & Sons.
- Morse, Kathryn. 2003. *The nature of gold: An environmental history of the Klondike gold rush*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Muise, Del. 1980. The Making of an Industrial Community: Cape Breton Coal Towns, 1867-1900. In *Cape Breton Historical Essays*, ed. Don MacGillivray and Brian Tennyson. Sydney: College of Cape Breton Press.
- Murdoch, Beamish. 1866. *History of Nova Scotia or Acadie*. 2 vols. Halifax, James Barnes.
- Murray, John. 2014. *Reading the Gaelic landscape/Leughadh aghaidh na tìre*. Dunbeath, Scotland: Whittles Publishing.
- Narváez, Peter. 2012. *Sonny's dream: Newfoundland folklore and popular culture*. St. John's, Newfoundland: Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Publications.
- Nettl, Bruno. 1976. *Folk Music in the United States: An Introduction*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.

- Newton, Michael. 2009. *Warriors of the word: the world of the Scottish Highlanders*. Edinburgh: Birlinn.
- . 2011. The Macs meet the ‘Micmacs’: Scottish Gaelic first encounters narratives from Nova Scotia. *Journal of Irish and Scottish Studies* 5 no.1 (Autumn): 67-96.
- . 2013. “Going to the land of the yellow men”: The representation of Indigenous Americans in Scottish Gaelic Literature. In *Irish and Scottish Encounters with Indigenous Peoples*, ed. Graeme Morton and David A. Wilson, 236-252. Montreal: McGill-Queen’s Press.
- . 2014. The great Caledonian forest of the mind. *Scottish Studies* 37: 164-73.
- . 2015. *Memory Keeper of the forest; Anthology of Scottish Gaelic literature in Canada*. Sydney: Cape Breton University Press.
- Nicholson et al. 1985. *Middle River: Past and present history of a Cape Breton community 1806-1985*. Sydney: Middle River Historical Society.
- Nicolaisen, W. F. H. 1961. Field-work in place-name research. *Studia Hibernica* 1: 74-88.
- . 1973. Place-names in traditional ballads. *Folklore* 84: 299-312.
- . 1992. The onomastic legacy of Gaelic in Scotland. In *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, 12, ed. Barbara Hillers and Jerry Hunter, 1-15. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Nì Dhomhnaill, Nuala. 1996. Dinnsheanchas: The naming of high or holy places. In *The geography of identity*, ed. Yaeger, Patricia, 408-432. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.
- Nilsen, Kenneth. 1989-90. The Gaelic place-names of mainland Nova Scotia: a preliminary survey. *Ainm: the Journal of the Ulster Placename Society* 4: 220-224.
- O Giollain, Diarmuid. 2004. *Locating Irish folklore: tradition, modernity, identity*. Cork, Ireland: Cork University Press.
- Ó Danachair, Caoimhin Ó. 1969. The Gaeltacht. In *Irish in the Modern World*, ed. Brian Ó Cuiv, 122-132. Dublin: Stationary Office.
- O Laoire, Lillis. 2005. *On a rock in the middle of the ocean*. Toronto: The Scarecrow Press
- Ommer, Rosemary E. 1977. Highland Scots migration to Southwestern Newfoundland: A Study of Kinship. In *The Peopling of Newfoundland: Essays in Historical Geography*, ed. John J. Mannion, 212-233. St. John's: ISER.
- Onebane, Donna McGee. 1999. Voices of Pointe Noire: A study in place and identity. PhD diss., University of Southwestern Louisiana.

- O'Sullivan, Aidan. 2001. Crannogs: places of resistance in the contested landscapes of early modern Ireland. In *Contested landscapes; Movement, exile and place*, ed. Barbara Bender and Margot Winer, 87-101. New York: Berg.
- Patterson, George. 1877. *A history of the county of Pictou Nova Scotia*. Montreal: Dawson Brothers.
- Patterson, George G.. 1978. *Patterson's history of Victoria County*. Edited by W. James MacDonald. Sydney, NS: College of Cape Breton Press.
- Paul, Daniel. 1993. *We were not the savages: Collision between European and Native American civilizations*. Halifax: Nimbus.
- Pepin, Pierre-Yves. 1968. *Life and poverty in the Maritimes*. ARDA project #15002 Ottawa, ON: Department of Forestry and Rural Development, NSA.
- Pocius, Gerald L. 2000. *A place to belong: Community order and everyday space in Calvert, Newfoundland*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Portelli, Alessandro. 1991. *The death of Luigi Trastulli and other stories: Form and meaning in oral history*. Albany, NY: The State University of New York.
- Prebble, John. 1969. *The highland clearances*. London, UK: Penguin.
- Primiano, Leonard. 1995. Vernacular religion and the search for method in religious folklife. *Western Folklore* 54, no. 1 (January): 37-56.
- Rankin, Duncan. 1929. *History of the County of Antigonish, Nova Scotia*. Toronto: MacMillan Company of Canada Ltd.
- Rankin, Effie. 2004. *As a' Bhràighe/Beyond the Braes: The Gaelic Songs of Allan the Ridge MacDonald, 1794-1868*. Sydney: University College of Cape Breton Press.
- Relph, Edward, 1976. *Place and Placelessness*. London: Pion.
- Richards, Eric. 2007. *Debating the Highland clearances*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Rieti, Barbara. 2004. *Strange terrain: The fairy world in Newfoundland*. St. John's, Newfoundland: ISER Books- Faculty of Arts Publications Memorial University of Newfoundland.
- . 2008. *Making witches: Newfoundland traditions of spells and counterspells*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Reid, Jennifer. 1995. *Myth, Symbol, and Colonial Encounter: British and Mi'kmaq in Acadia, 1700-1867*. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press.

- Reid, Leonard M. 1973. *Sons of the Hector*. New Glasgow, NS: Hector Publishing Co.
- Richards, Eric. 2000. *The Highland Clearances: People, Landlords, and Rural Turmoil*. Edinburgh: Birlinn.
- . 2007. *Debating the Highland Clearances*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Rodman, Margaret. 1992. Empowering Place: Multilocality and Multivocality. *American Anthropologist* 94, no. 3 (September): 640-656.
- Ryden, Kent. 1993. *Mapping the invisible landscape: Folklore, writing, and the sense of place*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press.
- Samson, Daniel. 2008. *The spirit of industry and improvement: liberal government and rural-industrial society, Nova Scotia, 1790-1862*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press.
- Schama, Simon. 1995. *Landscape and memory*. Toronto: Random House of Canada.
- Schenda, Rudolf. 1982. Remarques sur le contenu socio-historique des récits légendaires. *Le Monde Alpin et Rhodanien* 10: 185-188.
- Selkirk, Thomas Douglas. 1958. *Lord Selkirk's Diary, 1803-1804: A journal of his travels in British North American and the Northeastern United States*. Ed. by Patrick White. Toronto: The Champlain Society.
- . 1984. *The collected writings of Lord Selkirk*, Vol. 1. Ed. J. M. Bumsted. Winnipeg: Manitoba Record Society.
- Sharp, Cecil James, Olive Dame Campbell, and Maud Karpeles, ed. 1952 *English folk songs from the Southern Appalachians*. Vol. 1. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Shaw, John. 1988. Observations on the Cape Breton Gàidhealtachd and its Relevance to Present-Day Celtic Studies. In *Proceedings of the first North American congress of Celtic Studies*, ed. Gordon MacLellan, 75-88. Ottawa: Chair of Celtic Studies, University of Ottawa.
- . 1992. Scottish Gaelic traditions of the Clìar Sheanchain. In *Celtic languages and Celtic peoples: Proceedings of the second North American congress of Celtic studies*, ed. Cyril J. Byrne, Margaret Harry and Pádraig Ó Siadhail, 141-158. Halifax: D'Arcy McGee Chair of Irish Studies, Saint Mary's University.
- . 1996. Brief beginnings: Nova Scotian and Old World bards compared. *Scottish Gaelic Studies* 17: 342-355.
- . 2007a. (E)migrating legends and sea change. *Folklore: Electronic Journal of Folklore* 37, 43-58. <https://www.folklore.ee/folklore/vol37/shaw.pdf> (December 17, 2017)

- . 2007b. *The Blue Mountains and other Gaelic stories from Cape Breton*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's.
- . 2007c. Scottish narrative overseas. In *Scottish life and society; A compendium of Scottish ethnology*, ed. J. Beech, O. Hand, F. MacDonald, M. A. Mulhern and J. Weston, 58-63. Edinburgh: John Donald.
- Shears, Barry. 2005. Highland minstrel to tourist icon: The changing role of the Highland piper in Nova Scotia society, 1773-1973. Master's thesis, St. Mary's University.
- . 2008. *Dance to the piper: the Highland bagpipe in Nova Scotia*. Sydney: Cape Breton University Press.
- Sinclair, Rev. Alexander MacLean. 1881. *Clarsach na coille*. Glasgow. A. Sinclair.
- . 1901. *MacTalla nan tùr*. Sydney, NS: MacTalla Publishing Company.
- . 1910. A collection of Gaelic poems. *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* 24: 259-76.
- Smyth, Gerry. 2001. *Space and the Irish cultural imagination*. New York: Palgrave.
- Sparling, Heather Lee. 2005. *Song genres, cultural capital and social distinctions in Gaelic Cape Breton*. PhD diss., York University.
- Spradley, James P. 1979. *The ethnographic interview*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston: New York.
- Stahl, Sandra Dolby. 1985. A literary folkloristic methodology for the study of meaning in personal narrative. *Journal of Folklore Research* 22: 45-69.
- Stanley, Laurie. 1983. *The well-watered garden: The Presbyterian church in Cape Breton, 1798-1860*. Sydney: Cape Breton University Press.
- Stanley-Blackwell, Laurie. 2006. *Tokens of grace: Cape Breton's open-air communion tradition*. Sydney: Cape Breton University Press.
- Stanley-Blackwell, Laurie and Shamus Y. MacDonald. 2016. Going strong: The role of physical strength among the Scots of Eastern Nova Scotia and Cape Breton. *Material Culture Review* 82-83 (Fall 2015-Spring 2016): 12-28.
- Stewart, Kathleen. 1988. Nostalgia: A Polemic. *Cultural Anthropology* 3: 227-241.
- Stilgoe, John R. 1982. *Common landscape of American, 1530 to 1845*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

- Story, George. 2012 [1990]. The view from the sea. *Regional Language Studies*, no. 23 (October 2012): 1-17.
- Sutherland, George R. 1980. *The rise and decline of the Earltown community*. Truro, NS: Colchester Historical Museum.
- Thomas, Taffy. 2014. *Midwinter folk tales*. Stroud, UK: History Press.
- Taggart, James. 1990. *Enchanted maidens: Gender relations in Spanish folktales of courtship and marriage*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Taylor, Simon, ed. 1998. *The uses of place-names*. Edinburgh: Scottish Cultural Press.
- Tennyson, Brian Douglas, ed. 2014. *Impressions of Cape Breton*. Sydney: Cape Breton University Press.
- Thomson, Derick, ed. 1994. *The Companion to Gaelic Scotland*. Glasgow: Gairm Publications.
- Thornhill, Bonnie. 2006. *The road to North River*. Englishtown, NS: Victoria County Historical Society.
- Thornton, Thomas. 2008. *Being and place among the Tlingit*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Thurgood, Ranald. 1999. Storytelling on the Gabarus-Framboise coast of Cape Breton: Oral Narrative repertoire analysis in a folk community. PhD diss., Memorial University of Newfoundland.
- Toelken, Barre. 1975. Folklore, worldview, and communication. In *Folklore: Performance and communication*, ed. Dan Ben-Amos, and Kenneth Goldstein, 265-286. The Hague: Mouton.
- . 1990. Folklore and reality in the American West. In *Senses of Place; American Regional Cultures*. Ed. Allen, Barbara and Thomas J. Schlereth, 14-27. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press.
- . 1996. *Morning dew and roses: Nuance, metaphor and meaning in folksongs*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- . 1998. The Yellowman tapes, 1966-1997. *Journal of American Folklore* 111, no. 442 (Autumn): 381-391.
- Toelken, Barre and Kirin Narayan. 2008. Singing and retelling the Past: A conversation with Kirin Narayan and Barre Toelken. In *Living with Stories: Telling, Re-Telling, and Remembering*, ed. William Schneider, 95-98. Logan: Utah State University Press.

- Toomey, Kathleen Kay. 1991. Emigration from the Scottish Catholic bounds 1770-1810 and the role of the clergy. PhD diss., University of Edinburgh.
- Tuan, Yi-Fu. 1974. *Topophilia: A study of environmental perception, attitudes, and values*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- . 1979. Space and Place: Humanistic Perspective. In *Philosophy in Geography*, ed. Stephen Gale and Gunner Olsson: 387-427. De Kalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press.
- . 1991. Language and the making of place: a narrative-descriptive approach. *Annals of the Association of American geographers* 81, no. 4 (December): 684-696.
- . 2003. On human geography. *Daedalus* 132: 134-137.
- Tylor, Edward. 1920. Primitive culture. New York: J. P. Putnam's Sons.
- Wagner, John and Anthony Davis. 2004. Property as social relations: Rights of "kindness" and the social organization of lobster fishing among northeast Nova Scotian Scottish Gaels. *Human Organization* 63, No. 3: 320-333.
- Watson, James and Ellison Robertson. Eds. 1987. *Sealladh gu taobh: Oral tradition and reminiscence by Cape Breton Gaels*. Art Gallery, University College of Cape Breton.
- Watson, Seumas. 2002. Ás a' Choillidh Dhuibh: Cunntasan Seanchais air a' Chiad Luchd-àiteachaidh an Eilean Cheap Breatainn. In *Rannsachadh na Gàidhlig 2000*, ed. Colm O'Baoill and Nancy McGuire: 271-277. Obar Dheathain : An Clo Gaidhealach.
- . 2007. Seinn fo sgàil nan geugan uaine/Songs from the greenwood. *An Rubha: The Highland Village Gaelic Folklife Magazine* 10, no. 1.
- . 2016. Fo na cabair/under the rafters: A' choille mhor/the great forest - Part Four. *An Rubha: The Highland Village Gaelic Folklife Magazine* 15, no 1.
- Watson, William John. 2002. *Scottish place-name papers*. London: Steve Savage Publishers.
- Whisnant, David. 1995. *All that is native and fine: The politics of culture in an American region*. Chapel Hill, NC: University North Carolina Press.
- Whiston, Norris. *Rogart Mountain Trail*. Municipality of the County of Colchester. www.colchester.ca/339-rogart-mountain-map-legend-1 (Accessed February 7, 2018).
- Wicken, William. 2012. *The Colonization of Mi'kmaw Memory and History, 1794-1928*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Wilson, Chris and Paul Groth. 2003. *Everyday America: Cultural landscape studies after J. B. Jackson*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Withers, C. W. 1996. Place, memory, monument: memorializing the past in contemporary Highland Scotland. *Cultural Geographies* 3, no. 3 (July): 325-344.

Wynn, Graham. 1990. Exciting a spirit of emulation among the 'plodholes': Agricultural reform in pre-confederation Nova Scotia. *Acadiensis*, 20, no. 1 (Autumn): 5-51.

Yaeger, Patricia. 1996. *The geography of identity*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Zumwalt, Rosemary Levy. 1988. *American folklore scholarship: A dialogue of dissent*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Archival Resources:

Campbell, Donald. 1830. Letter to a relative in Lewis, Scotland. Reprinted in the *Stornoway Gazette*, September 30, 1972. MG 100, Vol. 115, no. 33. Nova Scotia Archives (NSA).

Chearnley, William. 1861. *Journal and Proceedings of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly*. Appendix 34: 2. NSA.

Edmund M. Dodd and H. W. Crawley to Sir Rupert George. 1845. *Journal and Proceedings of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly*. Appendix 16: 70. NSA.

Gillis, Allan J. nd. *Lightening the Load*. Allan Gillis Fonds. MG 6.9. Beaton Institute, Cape Breton University.

Harding, Gordon Gavin. 1974. *Ancestors and Descendants of Rev. Allan and Harriet MacLean*. MG 100, vol. 183, no. 39. NSA.

Hendry, W. A. 1854. *Journal and Proceedings of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly*. Appendix 19: 159. NSA.

MacDonald Family, nd. MG 100, vol. 182, no. 17. NSA.

MacKenzie, Archibald, nd. *Biography*. MG 100, vol. 183, no. 9, NSA.

MacNeil, Angus. 1871. Will. MG 17, Vol. 72. Beaton Institute, Cape Breton University, Sydney.

Marshall, George. 1827. Work report, February 19. Judge John George Marshall Fonds, MG 1, Vol. 1282, #14, NSA.

McDonald, Ronald. 1819. Cape Breton land petitions and other materials, 1787-1843. RG 20, Series B, No. 2192, reel15796. NSA.

McNab, D. B to Sir J. G. LeMarchant. 1854. *Journal and Proceedings of the Nova Scotia*

House of Assembly. Appendix 19:165, NSA.

McNeil, Christie. 1820. Cape Breton land petitions and other materials, 1787-1843. RG 20, Series B. No. 2491, reel 15797. NSA

Petition from Inhabitants of Electoral District No. 8, New Annan. 1857. RG 5, Series P, Vol. 16, No. 28, NSA.

Magazines and Newspapers:

The Canso Causeway. 1987. Calendar. Paul MacDonald Fonds, MG 21.2. Beaton Institute, CBU.

Cape Breton's Magazine 28. [1981]. At the Glengarry Mineral Spring.

Cape Breton's Magazine 59. [1992]. Praise and Dispraise of the Rear and Shore: Two Gaelic Poems from the Margarees.

Eastern Chronicle. 1923. September 18.

Fear na Cèilidh. 1930. Blar an Rudha Mhoir. May.

MacDhomhnuill, Raonull. 1931. Oraid Failtichidh. *Mosgladh*. October.

MacNeil, Murdock. 1998. Migi Ceataidh agus luchair an t-Sagairt/Mickey Kettie and the priest's keys. *Am Bràighe*. Summer.

MacTalla. 1893. Sgeul a Margaree. July 15.

MacTalla. 1893. Naidheachdan na Seachdainn. September 9.

MacTalla. 1895. Naidheachdan. January 12.

MacTalla. 1895. Naidheachdan. June 29.

MacTalla. 1895. Mo Chuairt Shamhraich. September 21.

Mosgladh. 1931. The Parish of East Bay. January.

Nicholson, Patrick. 1943. An Cnoc a Bheannaich Iad. Acadh nan Gaidheal. *The Casket*. October 21 and 28.

Oran Inbirnìs. 1977. August 18.

St. Clair, James O. 1998. Inverness County Lore. *The Inverness Oran*. October 28.

Maps:

Bayfield, Captain. "Gulf of St. Lawrence, Cape Breton. Bras d'Or Lake." Map. London: Admiralty Office. 1875. H.O. 2758 NSA.

Church, Ambrose F. "Topographical Townships Map of Antigonish County, Nova Scotia." Map. Bedford, NS: A. F. Church. 1864. Antigonish Heritage Museum. Accessed December 16, 2017.
<http://www.novastory.ca/cdm/singleitem/collection/antmaps/id/33/rec/5>.

Fletcher, Hugh. "Province of Nova Scotia (Cape Breton Island). Sheet no. 8." Map.

Ottawa, ON: Geographical and Natural History Survey of Canada, 1884. Rumsey Map Collection, 2000. Accessed February 18, 2018.
<https://www.davidrumsey.com/luna/servlet/detail/RUMSEY~8~1~2633~290001>.

Fletcher, Hugh. "Province of Nova Scotia (Cape Breton Island). Sheet no. 11." Map. Ottawa, ON: Geographical and Natural History Survey of Canada, 1884. Rumsey Map Collection, 2000. Accessed December 16, 2017.
<https://www.davidrumsey.com/luna/servlet/detail/RUMSEY~8~1~2636~290004>.

Fletcher, Hugh. "Province of Nova Scotia (Cape Breton Island). Sheet no. 12." Map. Ottawa, ON: Geographical and Natural History Survey of Canada, 1884. Rumsey Map Collection, 2000. Accessed February 18, 2018
<https://www.davidrumsey.com/luna/servlet/detail/RUMSEY~8~1~2637~290005>.

MacKinlay, Andrew, and William MacKinlay. "MacKinlay's map of the Province of Nova Scotia, including the island of Cape Breton." Halifax, NS: A. & W. MacKinlay, 1862. Rumsey Map Collection, 2000. Accessed December 16, 2017.
<https://www.davidrumsey.com/luna/servlet/detail/RUMSEY~8~1~2372~220044>.

Recorded Interviews:

Abram, John. 2014. Interview with author, Stellarton, Nova Scotia, 22 February 2014.

Bonnar, 'Wild' Allan. 2016. Interview with author, Bay St. Lawrence, N.S., 27 August.

Burke, Theresa. 2011. Interview with author, Big Pond, N.S., 11 August.

Cameron, Mary Belle. 1972. Interview by Malcolm J. MacFarlane. Margaree Forks, NS. June 15. Tape T-0491. Beaton Institute, Cape Breton University, Sydney.

Campbell, Mary. 2015. Interview with author, Glenora, N.S., 3 October.

Currie, Angus. 2006. Interview with author, North Side East Bay, N.S., 12, September.

- George, Gary and Barry George. 2015. Interview with author, Benacadie Glen, N.S., 18 October.
- Gillis, Rita. 2004. Interview with author, Sydney, N.S., 30 October.
- Farrell, Rod. 2015. Interview with author, Benacadie, N.S., 18 October.
- Fraser, Barrie. 2015. Interview with author, East Lake Ainslie, N.S. , 30 September.
- Fraser, Willie. 2004. Interview with author, Deepdale, N.S., 30 April.
- — —. 2010. Interview with author, Inverness, N.S., 22 November.
- Kerr, Archie. 2015. Interview with author, Sydney, N.S., 13 October.
- Lydon, Peggy. 2004. Interview with author, Broad Cove Banks, N.S., 2 November.
- MacDonald, Alex. 2013. Interview with author, Castle Bay, N.S., 10 June.
- MacDonald, Archie and Elinor. 2014. Interview with author, Sydney, N.S., 25 February.
- MacDonald, Donald. 2007. Interview with author, Sydney, N.S., 15 March.
- MacDonald, Donnie. 2015. Interview with author, Timberlea, N.S., 6 September.
- MacDonald, Jeff. 2015. Interview with author, Glendale, N.S., 15 October.
- MacDonald, Jessie. 2015. Interview with author, Rankinville, N.S., 13 October.
- MacDonald, Joe Lawrence. N.d. Interview by John Shaw. Boisdale, NS. Cape Breton Gaelic Folklore Collection: Tape No. 211. Sruth nan Gàidheal. Accessed February 16, 2018.
<http://gaelstream.stfx.ca/greenstone/collect/capebret/index/assoc/HASH01da/27887797.dir/GF211i04.mp3>
- MacDonnell, Malcolm Fr. 2002. Interview with author, Antigonish, N.S., 22 November.
- MacDonnell, Margaret Sr. 2014. Interview with author, Sydney, N.S., 27 February.
- MacIntyre, Joanne. 2015. Interview with author, Mabou, N.S., 6 October.
- MacIsaac, Flora. 2015. Interview with author, Boisdale, N.S., 13 October.
- MacIsaac, Hector B. 2006. Interview with author, Port Hawkesbury, N.S., 15 October.
- MacKenzie, Catherine. 2008. Interview with author, Morristown, N.S., 9 October.

- — —. 2014. Interview with author, Morristown, N.S., 15 January.
- MacKenzie, Jimmy. 2009. Interview with author, Rear Big Beach, N.S., 31 August.
- — —. 2011. Interview with author, Rear Big Beach, N.S., 22 September.
- MacKinnon, Anna. 2009. Interview with author, Broad Cove Banks, N.S., 30 August.
- MacKinnon, Annie. 2005. Interview with author, Lismore, N.S., August 25,.
- MacKinnon, Cathie. 2009. Interview with author, Big Beach, N.S., 28 August.
- — —. 2010. Interview with author, Big Beach, N.S., 27 May.
- MacKinnon, Cathie. 2012. Interview with author, Big Beach, N.S., 14 May.
- MacKinnon, Cathie and Catherine MacNeil. 2011. Interview with author, Benacadie Glen, N.S., 22 September 2011.
- MacLean, Alex. 2006. Interview with author, Gabarus Lake, N.S., 24 September.
- MacLean, Margaret. 2007. Interview with author, Port Hood, N.S., May.
- MacLean, Neil Rev. 2006. Interview with author, Sydney, N.S., 9 September.
- MacLean, Peter Jack. 2004. Interview with author, Benacadie, N.S.,
- MacLellan, Derrick. 2015. Interview with author, Meat Cove, N.S., 15 October.
- MacLennan, Murdoch J. 2006. Interview with author, North River, N.S., 11 June.
- — —. 2007. Interview with author, North River, N.S., 21 August.
- MacLeod, Allan. 2014. Interview with author, Catalone, N.S., 1 March.
- — —. 2015. Interview with author, Catalone, N.S., 17 October.
- MacLeod, Katie Maggie. 2010. Interview with author, Margaree, N.S., 22 November.
- MacMillan, Allan. 2015. Interview with author, Judique, N.S., 1 October.
- MacNeil, Carlie *et. al.* 2015. Interview with author, Doug MacDonald and Martin MacNeil, N.S., 15 October.
- MacNeil, Daniel M.R. 2001a. Interview with author, Sydney River, N.S., 3 March.

- — — . 2001b. Interview with author, Sydney River, N.S., 3 May.
- — — . 2003. Interview with author, Sydney River, N.S., 13 September.
- MacNeil, Eddie. 2015. Interview with author, Benacadie Glen, N.S., 15 October.
- MacNeil, Jimmy Columan. 2005. Interview with author, St. Columba, N.S., 21 February.
- MacNeil, Maxie. 2004. Interview with author, Highland Hill, N.S., 1 December.
- MacNeil, Michael Jack. 2014. Interview with author, Benacadie Glen, N.S., September.
- — — . 2011. Interview with author, Benacadie Glen, N.S., 10 August.
- MacNeil, Mickey John H. 2008. Interview with author, Jamesville, N.S., 12 November.
- — — . 2010. Interview with author, Jamesville, N.S., 30 May.
- — — . 2015. Interview with author, Jamesville, N.S., 13 October.
- MacNeil, Murdock. 2003. Interview with author, Rear Christmas Island, N.S., 9 March.
- Morrison, Kenneth. 2014. Interview with author, Sydney, N.S., February 25.
- Ramey, Martha. 2010. Interview with author, Sydney, N.S., 21 May.
- — — . 2012. Interview with author, Sydney, N.S., 11 May.
- — — . 2013. Interview with author, Sydney, N.S., 27 August.
- — — . 2014a. Interview with author, Sydney, N.S., June.
- — — . 2014b. Interview with author, Sydney, N.S., August.
- Strachan, Souter. 2006. Interview with author, Framboise, N.S., 13 September.
- — — . 2008. Interview with author, Framboise, N.S., 2 February.
- Strachan, Soutler and Kenneth Morrison. 2009. Interview with author, Framboise, N.S., 1 September.
- Watson, Jim. 2015. Interview with author, Iona, N.S., 7 October.

